

A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
Government
OF THE
THOUGHTS.

By *GEORGE TULLIE.*

Sub-Dean of York.

L O N D O N;

Printed for *Wm. Chiswell.* at the *Rose*
and *Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-yard.*
MDCXCIV.

DISCOURSE

OF THE

Government

OF THE

THOROUGH

Aug. 17.
1693.

Geor. Royse R^m. in Christo

Patri ac Dom. Dom. Johanni

IN THE

Archiep. Cantuar. & sacris

Domest.

Sub Dean of York.

LONDON:

Printed for the Author at the Rose

and Crown in St. Pauls Church-yard.

2499. 187

T O T H E

Most Reverend Father in God

J O H N

By Divine Providence

Lord Arch-Bishop of
York, His Grace, Pri-
mate of England and
Metropolitan.

May it please your Grace,

THAT I take
the liberty to
Prefix so Great a
Name to so small a
Treatise, only the
Dignity

The EPISTLE

Dignity of the Subject, indeed makes some Compensation for the defects and meanness of the Present, for the Argument is Truly Great and Noble in it self, and what would deserve a much abler Pen, more leisure for Abstractions, a more Philosophical Genius, and both a wider

DEDICATORY.

wider compass, and
a closser collecti-
on of Thought, than
any I can pretend
to. Thus much
however may be
said, that a sense
of that Edification,
which ought always
to be the cheif aim
and Design of the
Pulpit, which first
gave Birth to this
Discourse, obliged
me

The E P I S T L E

me to write as familiarly and Practically as the Subject would well admit of. Such as it is, My Lord, my Relation to the Church of York, the Just esteem one has for the Concurrence of so many excellent qualifications in one Person, and my particular obligations

DEDICATORY.

*ons to your Grace
makes this publick
Acknowledgment of
them a Just Debt
from,*

My Lord,

Your Graces Most Dutifull

and Obliged Servant.

GEORGE TULLIE.

THE
PREFACE.

TH O I have no great opinion of Prefaces, to small Tracts especially, that seem not to require any Prolegomena, and so consequently design'd none, yet, since the printing This off, I find my self under a sort of obligation to say something that way, having been inform'd by some Friends that there was a Treatise lately publish'd (which has since come to my hands) with the same

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same Title I design'd for mine, and with a great name annex'd to it, and that both the Book, and the Vanity (as they thought it) of the Title page pass'd for mine with those that did not know me. From which imputation the publishing of this will, I hope, sufficiently clear me.

As to the Tract it self I shall make no other reflexion on it, than that it were indeed to be wish'd that That excellent person, whose name the Author is pleas'd to make use of, had carried on his Meditations from The Government of the Tongue, to the Springs and Wheels of all its motions, those Thoughts that set it a going; for then we might have expected a just discourse indeed upon the Argument.

I have little more to add, but that I am sensible the subject I have here undertaken might be managed after a
much

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much different manner from what it is by me, and that without running out either into the wide field of Logic or the Passions, which are distinct Arguments, both in themselves, and from what I here intended.

A Man who can turn his eyes vigorously inward, and read the hidden and mysterious part of himself, might, no doubt, make several reflections thereupon, not unworthy the observation of the thinking World; as, that in our most abstracted researches after Truth, our notices of things are fetch'd more from extrinsic and accidental hints than a just and regular inquiry, and a Man often falls upon a lucky thought as casually as Printing and Gunpowder were invented; that if the motion of our Thoughts in composing, &c. like that of the Sun, be both quick and bright too, that yet something of
down Earth,

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Earth, as the objects of sense, a fume or vapour in the head often interposes betwixt us and the Sun-shine we enjoyed, and Eclipses the expected discovery; that sometimes a sudden flash of Thought breaks in upon us, but either so faintly bright, that it but just gildes our Understanding, and then flies off, or so plentifully, that it dazzles and overpowers our Faculties, that we cannot retain it, as Meats of too high a Taste are not easily digested by a weak Stomach; that if our Thoughts run turbid and lutulent, as the dregs and sediments of Mortality will often make them do, that then they rise not up to the height of their Subject, if quick and nimble, that they seldom prove solid and weighty, as the same stream is rarely rapid and deep too; that the Position of a Chain of Thoughts may be easier banter'd
than

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than confuted, and that their Succession is by no means so fortuitous a thing as unobserving men are apt to apprehend it. He might shew particularly, and at large, how the prejudices of Education, Interest, Passion, &c. pervert the Sentence of the Understanding, when it sits upon its Object; that hence principally derive those different sentiments of things and persons, that so much imbroid the World; and that were it not for these bribes that corrupt our Thoughts, all Mankind would think a-like here, as 'tis certain they will do in each different state hereafter, since Truth in every thing is still the same, and like its Great Author, can be but one, a streight line that admits of none but it self betwixt the same indivisible points, and that 'tis therefore in a considerable measure the obliquity of mens Wills and
Affecti^{ons}

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Affections that hinder their thoughts from running parallel with it and one another.

Thus a man by observing the working of his Thoughts upon all Occasions, whether of Speculation or practice, might furnish the World with such Remarks as would carry both Pleasure and Profit in them, and let us more and more into the knowlledge of the terra incognita of our own lesser World, shew us both how we think, and how we might improve the mighty Talent. And herein the Genius of Aristotle was admirably great: He read himself, and therein all Mankind, in their true light and proper colours; for one man, stript to his reason and the due use of his faculties, is but the counterpart of another. His Logic was the pure result of his own Observations upon the working of his

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his Thoughts and the proceeds of his Reason: for Logic does not teach us to argue, Nature did that before it, but reduces our arguings into rules and methods, and shews us how we do it.

These Reflections I have only briefly and hastily huddled together, that if they chance to fall in with any happy and observing Genius, they may set it on work, and be the fortunate occasion of more perfect and consummate productions in this kind, and then I should think this lame and imperfect Essay infinitely better bestow'd than otherwise 'tis like to be; for I am so sensible of its Imperfections, that I could heartily wish it in my hands again. But 'tis now out of my own power, and so I must be content to lie at the mercy of the Reader for venturing with so small a force of Thought on
so

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so great and noble an Argument; for he that writes on Thoughts, writes on the pride and perfection of Humane Nature, on that which must yield us in a great measure the Satisfaction or Torments of the other Life, Thoughts excusing or accusing their Owners. He writes on that which is an unanswerable Proof of a divine, spiritual, and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us: For I defie all the Advocates of Deism or Atheism it self to conceive matter, howsoever thinn'd or modified, capable of thinking; for no man, I am sure, if he rightly consults his own Principle of Thought, can possibly reconcile himself to this apprehension, that Matter, pure Matter, can think, meditate, deliberate, reflect, be witty, argue, infer, pursue long chains of Consequences, and impart to man that vivacity and
spright.

THE
Government
OF THE
THOUGHTS.

CHAP. I.

HE that designs to write of Thoughts, had need tell the World, in the first place, what he means by the Subject of his Discourse, for this is a vast Argument in the general, as wide as the exercise and dominion of all the Powers, and Faculties of the Soul, and had need therefore be determin'd to some particular kind or Species of its operations; for there's no sailing to any profit or pleasure in so wide an Ocean, without know-
B ing

ing first whither you are bound, and what determinate Port you steer for.

I. THEN by Thoughts we do not understand those motions that pass in the lower Region of the Soul, the Passions or Affections that are excited in the Will, or in the sensitive Appetite, as some love to speak, these may indeed be touched upon now and then, by the by, but not otherwise. For besides, that it is not my design here to write a Book of Ethicks, as the Argument, considered in that latitude, would oblige me to do, the Passions or Affections are not Thoughts, in propriety of speech, but the effects or products of them, Thoughts are the Parents, Passions the off-spring, for by thinking, reflecting, and the brooding of the upper powers of our Souls, our Passions are form'd and brought forth in us; as the musing on an agreeable object, that we apprehend as present, raises in us Joy; on one that is yet in expectation, hope and desire; as, on the contrary the Thoughts

Thoughts of an object that is disagreeable, creates in us fear, anger, or sorrow, according as we conceive it present, or in futurity. Nor

II. DO I intend to speak here of all the several operations that are transacted in the upper Region of the Soul, the Understanding, as of its simple perceptions, forming of propositions, discursive, and retaining or recollecting power; the government of the Thoughts, in this acceptance of the Word, would oblige me, to direct how to form true, and discover false reasonings, which is the Province of the Logicians, and would oblige me to run out into those jejune and dry speculations, that are improper for a practical design.

I mean then by Thoughts here, neither the Passions, nor yet the reasoning, deliberating, and arguing faculty of the Mind, but that power chiefly, whereby we first of all gaze at, contemplate, muse upon, and converse with those images of things,

which our senses, for the most part originally represent to our fancies, and our fancies from them, paint forth in our minds. Any man who gives himself the liberty to think, and can make his Understanding the object of its own contemplations, is conscious to himself of these primary interviews of his mind with the objects let into it, and must own them antecedent to, and consequently distinct from, both his passions and reasonings about them, for a Man must first think, or look upon and view the ideas in his mind, before he can be any ways affected with, or argue or deliberate about them, as a man, for instance, must first think upon a formidable object, before he fears it, or reasons with himself how to escape the danger, that threatens him.

NOR can it possibly, in the Third place, be expected that I should treat of Thoughts in this limited acceptance of them, according to the vast variety of objects, that are their subject-matter, for these were an argument

argument, in the language of the Book of Job, *as high as heaven, what canst thou do, deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?* The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the Sea. Nor God, nor the whole frame, and æconomy of Nature terminate the Horizon, or bound the ramble, and excursions of our Thoughts, which extend themselves even to things that are not, that have no other being but what they borrow from a confus'd imagination, for our fancies, by a tumultuary compounding of ideas, instead of real, can create fictitious objects for their entertainment, and divert themselves as well with a chimæra of their own manufacture, as with the most real and substantial Being.

IT will be sufficient therefore, and indeed all that can well be perform'd on this argument, to draw the great and general lines of several of those excentric motions incident to our thoughts, and to endeavour to prescribe the regulation of them.

BUT to recommend a design of this nature to the minds of men with better success, it will be requisite, in the first place, to premise some of those many obligations that lye upon us to govern our Thoughts as well as our exterior words and actions.

SECT. 2.

AND first, we are obliged to this government of thoughts, because we may transgress the divine Law by them, as well as by the transactions of the outward man. 'Twas a fundamental flaw in the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and indeed of the generality of the whole Jewish Nation, that they thought an external obedience to the Law, which exempted them from all temporal penalties due to the violation of it, sufficient to denominate them righteous, without any regard had to the innocency of their hearts and affections. 'Tis no strange thing indeed that the Heathens generally, who were left to discover the divine

Nature with the naked eye of their own faculties, should content themselves with such an external righteousness, or obedience as this, which reached the outward man only, but 'tis a very surprizing consideration that the Jews themselves should take up with it, who knew their Law to have been enacted by a God, that is a searcher of hearts, who requires the service of the Spirit, and will be lov'd and obey'd with all the powers and faculties of the mind. But yet thus it was with that flow and carnal people: they had very little concern upon them for the observance of the Precepts, that related to the regulating the motions of the inner man, for there being no penalties expressly annexed to them, they looked on them as *advice* rather than *precept*. or at worst, that the guilt, contracted by their mental sins, was so done away by their sacrifices, that God would remember them no more. They understood little or nothing beyond the political Covenant, the terms whereof chiefly influenc'd their obedience, and so took up with such

Gen. in Matth.

25.

such a political righteousness, as consisted in the obedience of the civil Laws of the Jewish Common-wealth; hence it is that *Trypho* the Jew, disputing with *Justin Martyr*, says, that the Gospel Precepts, meaning those that command the obedience of the heart and affections, seem'd to him incapable of observance; and that *Josephus* reprehends *Polybius* the Historian, for ascribing the death of *Antiochus* to sacrilege intended, tho' not committed by him, τὸ ὃ μὲν τι πῶσαι τὸ ἔργον βαλευσάμενον, οὐκ ἔτι τιμωρίας ἄξιον, 'For as long, saith he, as he did not actually execute his intentions, he deserv'd no punishment; and that this was the old received notion of obedience, appears plainly enough from our Saviours correcting this misprision, in the 5th. of St. *Mat.* ye have heard, saith he, ver. 21. that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; if a man did not actually murder another, he was thought to have kept within the bounds of the eight Commandment, has indeed he did, as to the temporal penalty annex'd to the violation of it,

it, which was then principally regarded; but our Lord tells them plainly, *Verse 22.* that the guilt in this particular, lies as deep as the very beginnings, the first efforts and sallies of an angry mind towards a foolish quarrel that may end in blood, in which sense St. John affirms, that *whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*, is already so, tho his sword be still unsheath'd, and he has stab'd him only *in effigie*; again, says he, to the same purpose, at the *27th.* ver. *ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery*, if a man did but refrain from the actual embraces of a forbidden bed, how keenly soever he debauch'd by the strength of an impure imagination, yet he was, for all that in their notion of obedience, a chaste and modest man still, but our Saviour tells them a rape may be committed in the fancy, and adultery by a wanton glance. And that this Jewish notion of obedience, is not yet altogether antiquated under Christianity, seems but too evident from that trite proverbial saying amongst

mongst us; that *thoughts are free*; as if when men durst not let loose their hands, or their tongues, to work wickedness, yet they might give their desires and imaginations their full swing; and muse, and wish, and contrive, and please themselves with the Invention and Images of those things which they think it not safe to put in execution; whereas, on the contrary, the Laws of our Lord prescribe to our affections, set bounds to our fancies, regulate our desires, direct our intentions, govern our wishes, strike at sin in embryo, and check the first voluntary motions and tendencies of the mind to evil. Voluntary, I say, because 'tis hard to imagine that those *motus primæ primæ*, as the Schools speak, those first stirrings of Concupiscence which come not within the verge and compass of the Will, should fall under the lash and censure of the Law; a Souldier is not punished for having an enemy to encounter, but for not doing his duty to repel his assaults, if, instead of watching and repressing his motions,

he

he rather entertains him, then, but not till then, let the Law go upon him. God will certainly punish no man for an imperfection that is not in his power to prevent, and which he did not himself voluntarily contract, will not call us to an account for being proper Subjects of the Operations of his Grace, but for misusing it, and will not require it at any mans hands that he has the *Seeds* of evil scatter'd in his composition, but for suffering them to *fructifie* in the soil. However, it must still be own'd that as to all the irregular motions of the inner man, that fall under the disposal of our Wills, God hath concluded them all under sin, that, by *the wicked man's forsaking his thoughts*, the numberless vain thoughts that fly up and down his mind; he might the *more abundantly pardon*, II. 55. v. 7. accordingly the same Prophet tells us of those that *err in spirit*, Solomon of those that *err in imagining evil*, Prov. 14. 22. and Micah denounces woe to *the devisers of iniquity*. Hence the same wise King of Israel tells us in one place, that

II. 29. 24.

21.

Prov. 24. 9.
Prov. 14. 22.
Prov. 15. 26.

Psal. 3. 9.
Psal. 58. 2.

Acts 8. 22.

2 Cor. 10. 4.

Matt. 9. 4.
Matt. 15. 18,
 19.
Matt. 5.

that the thought of foolishness is sin ; in another place, that they err who devise evil ; in a third, that the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord ; as his Father David had before observ'd of some that their inward parts were very wickedness, and tells us of others that in their heart work wickedness, hence again it is that St. Peter requires Simon Magus to repent of the thoughts of his heart (for what is the subject of our Repentance but our Sins,) that St. Paul requires us to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, which supposes that of themselves they are naturally rebellious ; that our Saviour reprehends the Pharisees for thinking evil, and affirms of evil thoughts that they defile the man, as well as when they shoot forth into the exterior actions of murder, adultery, &c. The very intention and desire whereof he elsewhere equals with overt transgressions of the kind. The reason of all is, that God being the Father of the Spirits of all flesh, and the Kingdom of his Son a spiritual

spiritual Kingdom too; 'tis congruous both to the divine Nature, and ours, which is a stricture of his, that his Laws bear sway in our spiritual part, in our hearts and souls, our wills and affections; for would we have an infinitely glorious Spirit serv'd by dull flesh and blood only, and not rather like himself, in spirit and in truth, with those prime productions, those first born Sons of the immortal Nature in us? Has God made us men, and would we pay him but the spiritless homage of the animal part of us? Has he implanted a noble and immortal principle of life and motion in us, and shall it not share in our obedience to him, and consequently in the guilt of the transgression of his Laws? He is the natural Lord of both Soul and Body, has bought them with a Price, and therefore all the Reason in the World the Obedience we pay him should be commensurate to the extent of his Purchase; so that if we have any just abhorrence of Sin in the true Latitude of the Divine construction of it,

it, we must govern our Thoughts, as well as observe measures in our words and actions.

SECT. 3.

BUT I shall farther evince the obligations that lie upon us to order our Thoughts aright, from such considerations as seem to enhance the guilt of mental sins above those of the outward Man. For

I. T H O' it be an argument that sin has acquired an arbitrary power over us, and that the Law in our members has got the ascendent over the Law of our minds, when the seeds of evil thoughts shoot forth into criminal words and actions, and in this respect the off-spring is worse than the Parent, that is, 'tis worse to speak and do evil than barely to think it, yet consider the outward acts of sin separately and apart by themselves, abstracted from those previous cogitations that give them birth, and then the sins of the mind are

are infinitely more criminal, for is it not worse to prostitute an immortal Soul to sin and folly than a mouldering Carcase? the one is in the nature of the Artificer that models and contrives the sin, the other but as the instrument as it were in its hand, and who reckons the murthering sword as faulty as he that draw'd to sheath it in his brother? the one is as the mother of the spurious brat, or the womb wherein lust first conceives till the heart grow big and the reckoning of the sin be out; the other only comes and midwifes it into the world, and brings forth that which *brings forth death*, and who ever thought these two equally criminal? nay, let aside the guilt that derives from the corruption of the mind, and why should the worst actions of the outward man be reputed any more sinful than those of the horse and the mule that have no understanding? for sin is properly in the Soul only, the proper subject both of it, and of that grace which corrects it.

21 II. OUR Thoughts are always first in the transgression, and so in respect of precedency, are more inexcusable than outward actions; they are ring-leaders in the rebellion of sin against God, and persons of that Character are generally made, as exemplary in their punishment as they are in their crime; these are the first begotten of their Father the Devil, the eldest Sons of original corruption, *the might and the beginning of the strength of sin in us. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, &c.* There the Son of violence first layes his scene of blood, the Extortioner of oppression, the Adulterer of the forbidden bed, and so of the rest, for a man first *devises mischief*, in the Psalmists language, and then *puts himself in a way that is not good; and abhorreth not evil*: nay they are not only thus the Devils puny Counsel, that open the Cause and make a Motion in behalf of sin, but they are perpetually soliciting, abetting and pleading its Cause at the Bar of a debauch'd fancy and a bribed understanding, *And so it* where

where many times they unhappily carry it ; for 'tis no wonder that a corrupt Judge should give it on their side. Thus do our Thoughts cater and *make Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, bring and recommend the beloved Object to the Heart till it dotes and commits actual Folly with it ; thus they lay in fuel for our Sins, and not only enkindle, but blow up the fire into open flaming wickedness ; and therefore :

III. SINS of Thought are more criminal than outward Transgressions, in as much as the guilt of the one derives from the other, for all Thoughts are Errors as it were, of the first concoction, which affect nature in all her subsequent operations of life. Thoughts are as the Principal, outward acts but as Accessories. The one is in the nature of the cause, the other of the effect, for *out of the abundance of the heart does both the mouth speak and the hands act, and out of it, says the wise man, are the issues of life,*

C and

and I add of death too And who can blame the streams for their necessary partaking of the pollutions of their fountain? Thoughts then are the principle of spiritual life, or spiritual death in us, that great leading wheel within the engine, which as when it moves regularly, it causes the outward *hand* of our words and actions to *point* right, so when tis out of course, it puts all in the like disorder with it; for our actions will be of a piece with our thoughts, and no one acts like a wise man, who thinks like a fool. O generation of vipers, says our Lord to the Pharisees, *how can ye, being evil, think good things?* for, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* who can bring good words or deeds out of foolish, wandering, and unhallow'd thoughts? for, *how shall a man reap there where he has not sow'd?* can he from weeds reap grain, gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

IV. IF we govern not our thoughts, they will govern us, or,
to

to speak more properly, will leave us without any true government of our selves, they are natural movers that need no winding up, but are incessant in their motion towards good or evil, and therefore if we take not care to determine them to proper objects, they will run out upon any that come in their way, will haunt and dog us to the table, to the bed, to the closet, to the Church, will be perpetually intruding, interposing, and interrupting us in our duty, will either intercept all good motions, or distract and confuse us in the performance of them, and to be sure, will be most busie and impertinent at the time of our religious services, when we are to compose our Souls to the severest sobriety and intension of Meditation.

V. T H E peculiar malignity of evil Thoughts is farther visible in this, that they render the outward act of sin more or less criminal, according as they have been more

or less active in the contrivance of it : for every previous reasoning, premeditation, and debate, enhances its guilt and inflames its punishment, as that which argues a more studied and deliberate contempt of the supreme Legislator, and therefore it was that the murder of *Uriah* was more charged upon *David* than his adultery with *Bathsheba*. He took a great deal of thought about the one, but in the other thoughts took him.

VI. SINS of Thought have this particular aggravation above outward breaches of the Law, that they are committed upon less temptation than these, and the weaker the temptation, the more powerful is the strength of sin in us. The two great leading Passions of the Soul that determine us to, or deter us from, outward acts, are our hopes, or our fears, which carry many times so fatal, and so strong a byas with them, that they incline us to evil, even contrary

trary to the checks and reluctancies
of our own minds.

ILL times may scare men into
those actual compliances, which
left to themselves, they abhor, and
the impending danger, which,
as it bore a mighty stroke in the
commission of the sin, so, tho it
cannot justify it, yet will it make
some abatement of its guilt; but
Thoughts are, in this fence, free,
free from all external compulsion;
nor prisons can confine them, nor
fire nor sword force them into a
compliance; So that if they joyn
in the act, they are perfect Volun-
tiers in the service; and as our
Thoughts are thus above the reach
of fear, so of favour too, above
the love of friends, or the reve-
rence of great men, or the expecta-
tion of rewards, for who can pay
a man for that which no man
knows, but the Spirit of a man
which is in him; how shall out-
ward hopes influence the inward
transactions of ones own breast on-

ly ? external acts of sin indeed may have something to say for themselves , because they may chance to carry their wages , such as it is, along with them , but he who plays the knave , the adulterer , the murderer , &c. in his own heart, he has nothing in exchange for his Soul , but sins for pure sinnings sake , as it were without any prospect of ever being consider'd for his pains, without any other wages than the old standing one of death.

VII. AND Lastly , those Sins which have a more immediate relation to the mind and spirit, as pride envy , ambition , malice , unfaithfulness, uncharitableness, &c. which are transacted mostly in the inner man , as they are more incorrigible so consequently more criminal, than others. For as to those Vices which in a high measure depend upon the tempers and constitutions of our Bodies , want of fuel will in time dead their flame, when

when the spirits flag, the blood chills, and the pulse beats low, and the evil days come on wherein we have no pleasure in them, the decays of nature, set the Soul then at some tolerable sort of liberty to reflect upon her own condition; but as to the other, age generally only serves to confirm and establish us in them. For how rarely do we see a covetous wretch let go his hold of the earth, tho' he is dropping into it? how seldom are envy and malice exchange'd for contentment and good nature? and when see we the proud ambitious man reduced to the same level of mind with his humble neighbours? Sins of this kind have too much of the Ethiopian's skin, and the Leopard's spots, easily to admit the laver of regeneration. Accordingly we find the Angels, who kept not their first station reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the Judgment of the great day, for sins of this incorrigible kind. For suppose their sin pride and ambition, malice or

envy, or what you will, 'twas certainly transacted in the mind, without the intervention of corporal efficiency, and deriv'd its peculiar venom from the spirituality of its nature. Mental sins then were the first and are still, considered in themselves, the most crying provocations.

SECT. 4.

Other Reasons why we shou'd govern our Thoughts.

BESIDES what has been hitherto alledg'd on this behalf, the consideration of God's all-seeing eye ought also to influence the conduct of our Thoughts: they lie not indeed within the walk of humane justice, are without the ken of humane inspection, no eye can pry into the recesses of the heart, but God sees, and knows, and reads their subtlest motions and darkest intrigues with greater perspicacy

ty then we do men's outward words and actions : For *lo there is not a thought*, not the motion of the least fibre in our hearts, *but he knoweth it altogether, knoweth it afar off*, at the distance of Eternity it self, e'er we or our thoughts had any other being than in the Divine Idea. For *no thought can be withholden from him. Hell and destruction are before him, how much more then the hearts of the Children of Men ?* And then how strongly are we obliged to keep good order there, since they are under the eye of so intimate and accurate an Observer of their internal motions, and subject to the inspection of so true a Judge of good discipline, and so severe an Avenger of bad ? But I shall urge this consideration farther in it's proper place, as a means to assist us in the ordering of our thoughts aright. And therefore,

Job. 42. 2.

Prov. 15. 11.

II. IN order to this end, it would be considered that God bears

bears a special regard to the obedience of our hearts and affections : For tho bright and shining Examples of Vertue diffuse a lustre round about them , promote the divine honour, and induce men to glorifie the great Father of such burning Lights which is in Heaven , yet nothing is so unexceptionable a demonstration of the power of Grace and the sincerity of our hearts, as a conscientious care and management of those Thoughts that fly up and down in them ; for where such an obedience is yeilded to the divine commands as no eye can pry into but that which is ten thousand times brighter than the Sun in its Zenith, it cannot possibly admit of the least intermixture , or suspicion of by-respect, but must be render'd God purely for his own Sake, from a true spiritual principle of life, and in a spiritual manner ; and then what sacrifice can possibly be more acceptable to our Maker than the immediate issues and emanations of

of our Souls, when there is no Stander by, no Witnesses of what passes betwixt God and our Souls in private, no secular consideration that can possibly engage us, nor temporal rewards to induce, nor temporal punishments to force us to the discharge of so spiritual and hidden a duty?

III. **THIS** is a main point of Wisdom and Argument of good understanding to be able to order our Thoughts aright, and the acquisition of that noble Character should spur us on to this discipline of our minds: All the reasonable World will allow him to be a person of a vast compass of understanding, who by foreseeing and providing against the exigencies of State, by knowing how to compound, temper, and qualify the different interests, passions, and persuasions of Men, &c. prudently administers a Government; and if so, no less will he deserve this Character, who governs his Thoughts well, for they are

are a Great people for number, and as mutinous and disorderly as the most tumultuous rabble, so that they *who rule well*, in this sense too, *are worthy of double Honour.*

IV. AND Lastly, let the consideration of the noble and dignified Nature of our Thoughts induce us to an orderly management of them: for they are beams of that Light which is inaccessible; the immediate fruits and eldest Sons of that immortal Parent in us which is nearly allied to the Divinity it self; and how then can we possibly be so insensible of our own high Character, who were framed after the Image of the Immortal God, and are designed to be made more ample partakers of his Nature, as to lay out our time and our pains so busily as we do, in the management of a Family, acquiring an Estate, and supporting and adorning a mouldring Carcase, and

and yet totally disregard the me-
nage of our thoughts, which are.
the pride and glory of our Na-
ture? For wherein else but in
this thinking, reasoning, Power do
we differ from the inhabitants of
our stable or our kennel? And
as this in general discriminates our
Nature from theirs, so, I had al-
most said, do's one Man as much
differ from, and excel another, by
how much he is the better Master
of his thoughts, and can lay them
out to more generous purposes;
if therefore we have any just sense
of the dignity of our humane
Nature, and would advance and
improve that part of us which is
properly the Man, we must ma-
nage those thoughts by which we
manage all things else.

argument
not subject to mislead or to be
misused; I shall therefore content
myself to instance in some more
general defects and weaknesses of
the thinking Power in its leaving
a Man, who expects a
more exact draught of them,
to attend

CHAP. II. SECT. I.

HAVING thus endeavour'd to lay before Men the Obligations they are under to order their thoughts aright, I shall in the next place point out several of those Infirmities, Irregularities, and Defects, that are incident thereto, whereby it will more particularly appear, how Vain, and Frivolous, and Sinful they are. The Multiplicity of Objects and the great Variety of those notions whereby the mind entertains her self with them, renders it next to impossible to take in this argument in such a Latitude as to be able to descend to minute particulars; I shall therefore content my self to instance in some more general defects and weaknesses of the thinking Power in us, leaving it to every Man, who expects a more exact draught of them, to attend

attend to the motions of his own mind and to follow the jant of his thoughts after those Objects that keep them most company.

I. A-L-L Thoughts of our hearts are undoubtedly vain that are employed about criminal objects, as the gratification of any of our lusts, &c. For the sinfulness of the object imparts its guilt to the act of the mind that is conversant about it, no man can think of accomplishing a revenge, a fraud, a murder, &c. And be innocent?

Namque scelus in se tacitum qui cogitat

Facti crimen habet

is the voice of both Pagan and Christian Theology. St. Paul. Rom. 13. requires us not to make profession, as we render it, for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, for we are not to contrive, or project

ject before hand how to accomplish our wicked intentions, for our thoughts always lay the plot before it thickens into the last scene of actual execution, but this head is so plain that I need not longer insist upon it.

II. **THOSE** Thoughts must needs be very vain and foolish whose subject matter is vain and trifling: 'tis not every ones portion, to have their minds fraught with solid and substantial lading, some carry nothing but ballast, dull heavy conceptions, others carry too great a sail, are over light and airy; others trade only in toys, in news, fancies, fashions, Apes and Peacock feathers; neither nature nor education has furnished all men, with proper materials, for their thoughts to work upon; and therefore, since the common activity of their minds will not suffer them to be wholly idle, what wonder if they take up with unmanly arguments, and converse in

in their Thoughts, with their dogs or their horses, with the passages of the Theatre, the imaginary exploits of some Hero in a Romance, or the like, thinking to no purpose rather than not think at all.

III. As such Thoughts as these are *materially* vain, because their Objects are nothing worth, so other Thoughts may be said to be *formally* so, *i. e.* When tho' the *matter* of them is good, yet the *manner* and *turn* of the heart in thinking of them is not as it should be. Thus, the same numerical Prayer may be a sweet smelling savour from one man's mouth, and an abomination from anothers, where, tho' the matter of the service is one and the same, yet the different *turn of* heart and mind makes it, *formally* considered, a quite different performance. So, again, a wicked man may think of the same God, with a good one, where tho' the matter of his

D Thoughts

Thoughts be equally good; with the others, yet his thoughts are vain, because without Spiritual Life, and Vigour in them, whilst, by reason of such Qualifications, the others are accepted; and 'tis very possible for a wicked Man to have a Thousand *materially* good thoughts: and yet go to Hell in the midst of them: He may think of God and yet he never have the more service of him; he may think of Repentance, and yet continue the same impenitent Man he was; he may think of Death and Judgment, and yet his life be never the better. 'Tis hard if in such a vast Lottery of Thoughts, as is played at in our minds, a very wicked Man have not now and then a good chance; and yet if he is not renewed in the Spirit of his mind, and both the Principle and Course of his Actions, better'd by them, they are none of his own Thoughts, but Injections properly, with which his Soul is haunted; and such thinking of good things will be so far
from

from abating a Man's Guilt, that they will inhaunce his Punishment. In fine, as every thought of sin is not sinful (for a Man may think of it with Abhorrence) so neither do's every Thought of Piety and Religion , come under the Character it pretends to. For where the heart is carnal and vain, it de-secrates every good motion thrown into it, from without, and like a vitiated Stomach, instead of affording solid nutriment to the Soul , turns all it meets with into the morbidic matter of Sin.

IV. 'TIS a great vanity of our thinking Power, to leave the plain beaten Road of profitable and substantial Knowledge, for the narrow, crooked Paths of Vice and useless Speculations. The Word and Works of the Almighty, together with the Operations of our own minds, the wonders of the greater and lesser World, afford more solid stuff for our Thoughts to work upon, than the widest capacity was

ever able to go through with ; and yet such is the natural activity of our minds, and the fruitless Curiosity of some Men's, that they choose to *refine* upon them, commonly beyond usefulness, often beyond Sense, affect *Sciences falsely so call'd*, and spin cobweb Notions out of their own Brains, fit only to catch flies with. Thus has the insipid Nicety of the Schools mang'ed, and even *crucified* the Word of God, putting on it a crown of Thorns too, the barbarous Spinosities of their own Inventions ; and made the plain intelligible Doctrine of believing in God, and living well, a torture and rack to the Brains of the learned, and Consciences of the Ignorant. They have thinn'd the doctrine of Jesus into the fineness and air of the metaphysics, of *Aristotle*, and made their Schools as great an Asylum for the *Disputers of this World*, as their Churches are for the murderer, or other malefactor. And how should men gather grapes of such thorns, and
figs

figs of such thistles as these : Such brambles of dispute may tear and rent one's mind in passing through them, but can never edify it.

V. 'TIS another vain thought to imagine we can bring about our projects without having God in our thoughts, or by contrary means to what he has appointed ; thus the Jews, as God complains by *Jeremie* in the beginning of his Propheſie, had *forgotten him daies without Number*, and were alwaies projecting with themselves, without taking him into the consult, by what means they might ſlave off or elude the captivity threatned them ; in neglect of that only means of ſincere repentance he preſcribed them ; upon which account it is, that he requires *Jerusalem*, to *wash her heart from wickedneſs*, that *ſhe might be ſaved*, and asks how long her *vain thoughts ſhall lodge within her*. *Jerem. 4. 14.* They not only feigned to themselves that *Jerusalem*, the City royal of The Almighty Monarch of the

World was Impregnable, that the Temple of the Lord there was a sufficient Sanctuary to them, against all their Enemies ; and that it was impossible for *Abraham's* Seed to be in Bondage, to any Power upon Earth (in all which vain imaginations they were confirm'd by the false Prophets that abounded most when the State was most corrupt) but that if they were at any time attack'd by the Chaldeans, they would strengthen themselves in the strength of *Pharaoh*, by entering into a Confederacy with *Egypt* ; tho' God' had denounc'd several woes long before against that Project. And how common a thing it is for Men to leave the mighty Counsellor out of the Cabinet, to trust in an arm of flesh, and pursue the Maze and Labyrinth of their own devices, in accomplishing the designs they have upon the Anvil : We need no other, and can have have no better argument to convince us than our own Experience of the wicked projects

jects this day set on foot by the grand Incendiary of *Europe*. There is no Subject doubtless, whereon our Thoughts are more busily imployed, than in framing and contriving those designs we have under the Sun; And yet, which proves the extream Vanity of 'em, for the most part to little or no purpose. For, *Man's goings are of the Lord*, how much soever he thinks them of himself, and how then, as the wise King asks the question, *can a Man understand his own Ways?* We project, devise, propose Ends, prosecute, apply Means; and yet all the while are managed, acted, and, as often as the divine Wisdom pleases, overruled and defeated, by an invisible Hand behind the Curtain; for, *I know, O Lord*, saies the Prophet *Jeremy*, *that the way of Man is not* Jer. 10. 23. *in himself, 'tis not in Man that walketh to direct his own Steps.* And in *Isaiab* he has particularly declared *Wo to them who take Counsel but not of Him, who ask, but* Is. 30. 1, 2. *not*

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V. 3.

1 Cor. 3. 19,
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not at his Mouth, the practice of States-men amongst his own People in the case before mention'd, and for which reason, as he there threatens, he afterwards made the strength of Pharaoh (wherein they trusted) *their Shame, and their Trust in the shadow of Egypt their Confusion.* For in the excellent Language of the Apostle upon this Argument : *The Wisdom of this World is foolishness with God : For, it is written, he taketh the wise in their own Craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the Thoughts of the wise that they are vain.*

VI. THERE is another vanity of Thought, which our Lord himself takes such express Notice of, and that in his excellent Sermon on the Mount, that it must not here be disregarded by us ; and that is an intemperate Solitude and Anxiety of Thought, for the things of this present Life ; the vanity whereof he evidences with a force of Argument, and

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Strain of words, like himself, truly Divine, and which will therefore abundantly supercede, any farther illustration of the matter : For, First, he argues *a majori ad minus*. *Is not Life more than Meat*, Mat. 6. 23; *and the Body than Raiment ?* i. e. Will not he, think you, who first kindled in you the vital flame, furnish you with fuel to keep it in ? Will not he who gave you a body, give you a covering to it ? Then Secondly, he reasons from instances of God's Providence to Creatures, of a nature far inferior to Man, from his feeding the *Fowls of the Air* ; and his cloathing the *Lillies of the Field*. Thirdly, he shews the vanity of this Anxiety of Thought, from its insignificancy and ineptitude, to the attainment of what we propose to our selves from it, for which of you, sayes he, *by taking thought can add one Cubit to his Stature*, or, as others expound the place, can with all his anxiety, add the least proportion to his Age, or extend the

v. 32.

the period of his Life. And then as he adds, in St. Luke's relation of the passage, *if ye are not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye Thought for the rest?* If ye are not sufficient of your selves to preserve your Lives till to Morrow, why so infinitely busie to make provision for them? Fourthly, he tells 'em plainly, that for his followers to lay out their Thoughts so immoderately about the affairs of this Life, is to be still upon the same level with a gentile Spirit, *for after all these things do the Gentiles seek, besides that your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these Things*; And he is not so unnatural a Parent as to let his Children go destitute of the necessary accommodations of humane life. Thus has our Lord himself in an ample and extraordinary Manner, expos'd the vanity of this misemployment of our Thoughts to our hands, and we shall have occasion to insist farther on this argument hereafter.

VII. THERE

VII. THERE is a certain dulness or stupidity incident to the thinking Power, when the mind does not go, but, like a clock with the plummets off, stands still, is heavy and dumpish, and has no distinct conceptions of any objects let into it, but nods and and falls asleep, as it were, and runs into another World, as Men in dreams do. And this, I conceive, is generally occasion'd, where it is not owing to a natural Defect, either by guilt within, or troubles and dangers from without. First, Guilt within, is alwaies apt to confuse our Reasonings, choak and break in upon our Apprehensions of things, and strangle our Thoughts; it alwaies lies Cross and Heavy in our mind and deads that Chearfulness and Alacrity of thinking that Innocence naturally gives it. And then, Secondly, for Dangers and Disasters, they fix the mind upon the contemplation of the Object that Frights or Disquiets it, render a
Mans

Man's Spirit dead, as it were, within him, congeal his Powers, make them stiff and destitute of motion, so that a man has not for that time the command of his Reason to look about and provide fit means to escape the danger that threatens him.

VIII. 'TIS another miscarriage in the management of our thoughts when we propose no one good and fixed End of Life, for the supreme Object of our Pursuit. Some have working imaginations never idle, always sticking, but as good never a whit as never the better, as the Phrase is. For it is not enough for a Man to have this or that particular End in his View, as opportunity presents, and his occasion require: But he must have a further and a fairer Mark, at which he aims and directs them all: A Man may make this or that harbour, as occasion serves in his voyage, but sure every motion he makes is in subserviency to gain some one deter-

determinate port of Traffick, for otherwise, as the one sails uncertainly, and to very little purpose, so the other thinks and lives but from hand to mouth, as we say; by breaks and by parcels, without any dependance and coherence in Thought or Action; he pursues no one Road of Life, but takes into every by-path and his Thoughts like a wanton Spaniel in its range, run after every accidental Game that comes in their way.

*Est aliquid quò tendis, & in quod dirigit
arcum?*

*An passim sequeris corvos testâque la-
toque*

*Securus quò pes serat, atque ex tempore
vivis?*

IX. ANOTHER sinful weakness of our Thoughts is seen in their being so much at the command of our passions, as, if you observe it, they generally are, for tho' Thoughts are originally antecedent

cedent to our passions, as a Man must first think before he can be affected with Joy, grief, anger, &c. Yet when these passions are once up, they command the Thoughts that made them, and imploy them wholly on those objects that raise and affect them; So that look what affections bear the sway, in a Man's heart, that way his thoughts will take their course; as for instance, tho a man must first think before he can be angry, yet when that Passion is once up it lays out for that time all the Thoughts of an unsanctified Heart upon the Injury, Affront or Injustice done one, and the means whereby we may effectually resent and revenge it. So, again when Love and Desire have taken possession of us, be the Object what it will, our minds are always musing on it, *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire, Says Jeremy,* the things they love and delight in? No: Our Thoughts are always present with their beloved Object;

run

run after it and into it, and represent it to us with far more advantages than it really carries along with it. And the like might be said of any other of our affections. They discompose our minds, confuse our Souls, and like a too powerful Enemy breaking in upon us, put the numerous Army of our Thoughts into disorder; so that when the heat of the Battle is over, a Man looks back upon the defeat with Sorrow and Regret; and is at a vast expence of trouble to rally up his scatter'd good Thoughts again, and to put them once more in a posture of defence against those intestine disturbers of his Quiet. Now, I say, this is a signal weakness in our thoughts; to be thus carried away by our passions; at their Will and Pleasure; for our thinking Power was given us, amongst other Ends, to regulate and prescribe to our passions, and not our passions to them.

BUT since they were given

us for good Ends and Purposes, and we are not requir'd to eradicate but to govern them, therefore the Apostle's rule is the proper Remedy in this Case, *viz.* That we set our affections on things above, not upon things that are upon the earth. For our Thoughts will partake of the Qualities, and Genius of our Affections; if the one are Heavenly and Divine, the other will on course be so too. *David*, speaking of the Blessed Man, tells us, *Psal. 1. ver. 2.* That his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and then adds, that in his Law doth he meditate day and night; and in another place, professing of himself that he loved the divine Law, he affirms likewise *Psal. 119. 97.* that it was his meditation continually. For Men naturally meditate on what they love and delight in: and in *Malachy the Fear of God*, and *Malach. 3. 16.* and thinking upon his Name are joyned together.

X. THERE is another sinful Vanity of our Thoughts, in making

ing the concerns of other Men their Objects, when they make Incurfions into their Neighbours Affairs, break down his Inclofures, and impertinently ramble through all his concernments: For fuch is the Curiofity, or Malice, or Envy, or I know not well what to call it, of fome perfons, that they can entertain their Thoughts (as they do their company too upon occafion) much more agreeably with other Men's matters than their own, and ev'n whilft they keep at Home, incur the guilt of their Character whom St. Paul ftiles *buſſe Bodies, Tatlers, wandring* (in their Thoughts) *from Houſe to Houſe* : The Practice of thoſe generally, who, in their own phraſe, have nothing to do, as wanting Matter, I conceive, in themſelves for their Thoughts to feed and exert upon.

NOW this imployment of our Thoughts is not onely filly, and impertinent to any good purpoſe of Life, but 'tis criminal too, in as

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much

much as every Man, let him have as much secular business as he will, yet has work enough upon his hands, the improvement of his mind, the government of his Passions, and the salvation of his Soul, to take up all his Thoughts, all his time and leisure, and therefore it must needs be Sin in a Man, in neglect of his own proper business, to let the precious sand of his Thoughts run out upon other Mens, where they are not call'd and have nothing to do.

A N D as it is a vanity of our Thoughts to gad so much abroad amongst our Neighbours affairs where they have no business, so are they no less vain in this, that when they stay at home and turn their Eyes inward, they are apt to overlook the failings and imperfections of their Owners. Every Man has his *Fort* and his *Foible*, his strong and his weak part, his seeing and his blind side, and whilst the eyes of our minds view the

the one, even the least *Mote* of Excellency in us, with infinite Complacency and Satisfaction, they commonly wink so hard at the other, that they let *Beams* themselves escape their Observation. For every one that *doth evil bateth the Light* of his own mind, *neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds* Mat. 7. 8. *should be reprov'd* : For self Love is ever ready to take care that a Man fall not out with himself.

Lastly, ANOTHER leading imperfection of our Thoughts, is observable in their Levity or want of fixation ; whereby we become as *unstable as water*, and shall not excell : *The heart of the foolish is like a Cart Wheel*, saies the wise Son of Sirach, and his Thoughts are like a *rolling Axle-tree* : Glib and volatile in their Motions, nothing so volatile and aery as they ; they stream and shoot in an instant from one corner of the Earth to another, soar as high as Heaven, and dive as deep as Hell, curvet and caper o-

ver the whole Creation, and as if that were too little for them, flie beyond the limits of the Universe, and the bounds of time, to Eternity and Imaginary Spaces. Like wanton Spaniels they set out with you, and perhaps wait on you home again, but range every Field, and and pursue every game that comes in the interim in their way, or like some restless birds, they no sooner light upon one object than they presently take wing and fly off to another, by which means there happens many times so quick a Succession, or rather indeed such a tumultuary Jumble of Ideas in our heads, that we lose our selves as in a Maze, get into a Labyrinth of our own making, and can hardly remember the goal from which our thoughts first started, so that if we look'd them over again, and could but trace them in their rambles and excursions from one Object to another, we should find them many times no more coherent than our Dreams,

or

or the roving, and extravagant apprehensions of Mad-men, and perhaps the main difference betwixt the Mad-man in Bedlam, and the other musing in his Study lies in this, that the one is so foolish as to utter his Conceptions as they throng into his head, and the other so wise as to conceal them.

NOW there may be several causes of this Imperfection; if we will trace it up to its spring head, we must go as far back as the Fall of *Adam* for it, when the mind leaving the pursuit of the chief and supream Good, about which it regularly moved as about its proper Center, and proposing to it self the acquist of infinite other false and fictitious Goods in its stead, it became, like a wandering Star, planetary and erratic in its Motions.

AGAIN we may find another cause of this in our own Composition; we are all fearfully and wonderfully made up of two very dif-

ficult parts, Soul and Body, and yet so that the Operations of the Soul do in a great measure depend upon the temperament of the Body; now the great Instruments in our rational, as well as animal Operations, are those subtile parts of the blood call'd Spirits, which in the very constitution of some Persons, those especially of a sanguine Complexion, being of a fine and light Contexture, do necessarily cause a like Levity of the mind in thinking, for we cannot possibly help apprehending after their Motions and Impressions.

AND as this volatility of mind is natural to some Constitutions, so may several accidents produce it in others, a blow upon the Head, a distemper in the Brain, or intemperance may put the blood into such a preternatural fermentation, and so agitate and confuse the Spirits that there will necessarily ensue a like Levity and Confusedness of the mind in thinking,

BUT

BUT that which carries the most general and principal stroke in this affair is certainly the wantonness of our imaginations, which is often presenting our understandings with fine Pictures and Images of things, which inveigle our minds to run a gadding after them, let the Spirits agog, divert the main stream of our Thoughts from their primary channel, and let them run out, like water spilt upon the ground, upon foreign and improper objects. So that even the most thoughtful men many times are not able to direct one line of Thoughts streight on, but lose sight of the subject they at first began with. For imagination is a busie restless sort of power thats seldom or never idle, but most of all exerts its activity when the Understanding is lazy and out of employment. No sooner does the tempting object from without, honour, or pleasure, or profit, make its way through the doors of our senses to our understanding, but this facul-

ty like a Master of the Ceremonies, ushers it in, harangues upon its Excellencies, and desires it may have audience ; if a Man hankers after honour, and his temper is ambitious, the imagination presently lifts him up to one of the highest *Pinnacles* of the Court, shews him *all the Kingdoms* of greatness, together with Followers, Dependants, Attendants, Retinue, and the other *glories of them*, so that the Man's Thoughts are always mounting, making ladders, as it were, to himself, and contriving how to climb higher. So, again if an object of profit has possess'd the mind, the fancy presently begins to survey the land, to set off the value and conveniency of Goods laid up for many years, and falls a telling over the money, as it were, before your eyes, to ingage you in its pursuit, and makes your *Thoughts*, in the Prophets language, *go after your covetousness*. So, again, if the idea of a pleasurable object has stoln in-at your eyes, the same faculty presents

presents you with more charms than any one else can see in it, summons all the senses to bear witness to the several gratifications it affords them, and recommends the object so long till your deluded Thoughts, play the adulterer and commit folly with it, and in all these cases, like a flattering Painter draws the Picture of the object far more beautiful and exact than ever the original could pretend to and by these means breaks off the connexion of our Thoughts, cuts them short of the object they should pursue and renders them light and desultory.

NOW this defect, as far as 'tis purely casual, or as far as 'tis natural, owing to our complex'd constitution of Soul and Body, cannot be criminal, but then comes certainly under that denomination, and is sin to us, where the natural infirmity is countenanc'd and indulg'd, especially in divine worship,
or

or the defect is voluntarily acquired by intemperance or the like.

AND now that we are upon this Head it may not be improper here to subjoyn other vanities of our Thoughts that are principally owing to the same cause of a wanton and ludicrous imagination : for indeed this power carries a mighty stroke with us, influencing, in a great measure, their determination of the judgment, the choice of the will, the pursuit of the affections, and in consequence of all these, the execution of our bodily powers.

SECT. 2.

AND here I shall first take notice of that error of Thought it occasions in us, when we apply our selves to the consideration of spiritual and immaterial substances. For being used to think by the intervention of Ideas from our senses

senses, which are conversant only about material objects; the imagination, which receives these impressions from our senses, is apt to draw the same gross Images of immaterial beings, as of Spirits, Angels, and of God himself; and we being used to view the objects we think of as they are represented in the looking glass of fancy, are apt foolishly to conclude, that the originals resemble those Pictures of them, and so make no distinction in our conceptions betwixt material and immaterial objects; hence it is that we conceive Angels to be like young Boys, and the great God like a grave old Man; that very vanity of *imagination*, as the Apostle terms it, of which the Gentil World stood guilty, in *changing the glory of the incorruptible God* Rom. I. 21, *into an Image made like corruptible* 23. *Man, &c.*

II. WE shall consider that vanity which Fancy imparts to our Thoughts in relation to sensual

sensual and voluptuous objects ; for hereby Men frame and figure to themselves those unlawful enjoyments which 'tis not in their power to put in execution, courting, and addressing, and complementing, and making fine speeches in their minds to speculative idols of their own framing ; fond Ixions that embrace the Clouds and vapours of their own lusts, *filthy* waking *dreamers* that defile, not the flesh only, but when that's out of employment, commit incest with the Daughters of their own imagination ; an argument of great depravity of Soul this, for Men to make procurers of their Thoughts, to prostitute their very Spirits, and put out Conscience, that *Candle of the Lord*, that all may appear like Night about them, whilst they commit their deeds of darkness, their imaginary rapes, whoredomes and debaucheries. We have the voice of Scripture for it, that this *spiritual wickedness* is adultery, without any farther progress in the fact. But

III. THERE

III. THERE is yet a worse vanity of the Thoughts, if possible, in relation to the same voluptuous Objects, and that is a repetition of these sinful Pleasures of the Mind, when they are past and gone, and have been really transacted. When men are not satisfi'd with the harvest they have already reap'd, but must have a latter Marth, as it were a second crop of delight in their Thoughts and imaginations; must renew their filthy scene in their own bosomes, erect a stage there, and their Fancies act over again the same brutal Comedies again, with fresh satisfaction. The fault this, generally, of overgrown and disabled sinners, dry trees that have green leaves, tho' they are past bearing fruit, Men whose vices have left them, not through supernatural Grace, but natural Infirmary, who lamenting not their Sins, but their Impotence, endeavour, by the strength of an impure Imagination yet living in them, to conjure up the Ghost of their old departed Lusts,

Lusts, to make the dry bones live, and give their dead Sins a Resurrection from one grave, whilst they themselves are ready to drop into another.

SO, again, this mental repetition of sinful acts is seen in several other Cases, as when a man has overreach'd and defrauded his Brother in any kind, he is apt inwardly to applaud himself for the villany, to walk over those steps, again in his mind, by which he circumvented him, and repeat the dishonesty with as much satisfaction as he committed it; so Men that are of bitter and implacable Spirits, will act over their revenge again in their Thoughts, make the wounds already given their Adversary, bleed afresh, in their own minds, and stab him once more in Effigie, and so of other Vices.

NOW a Man must be arriv'd at a very high measure of Impenitency and Impiety, who thus indulges.

dulges. One would think it were enough for Men to commit the outward acts of Sin with greediness ; but to repeat them with delight again, is to approve of them upon mature advice, and boldly to declare against all Relentings and Repentances, which ever look with horror, not with satisfaction, upon our by past evil Actions. The great Apostle makes it an argument of a very wicked disposition, not onely to commit Sin, but to take pleasure likewise in those who do so, and if there be any difference in the case, 'tis certainly the worse to be pleas'd with ones self for so doing. For every such after game of internal complacency is a fresh commission of the Sin, stains the Soul with a new guilt, and that so much the deeper, by how much 'tis the more criminal to ingage, not only the powers of the body to commit Sin, but the faculties of the Soul likewise to view and contemplate and repeat it.

IV. ANOTHER Vanity of Thoughts, chargeable upon a wild and ungovern'd Imagination, is observable in Men's framing fine Schemes, and Images, and suppositions of things, and then pleasing themselves with them, as if they were Realities, and they actually enjoyed them. For the Fancy has a sort of power of Creation, and can hold up the Images of Idols of its own making, fictitious Honours, Riches, &c. till the foolish Heart falls down and worships them. Thus you shall have Men placing themselves in some high Posture, or eminent Station, or plentiful Fortune, and then amusing themselves with ten Thousand idle Projects, how they would behave themselves in such Circumstances; what figure they should make, what interest they would drive on, &c. Cutting out as much work for themselves, as if they were in the actual possession of the Fools Paradise, they have invented. These and the like imaginations

tions are the frequent entertainment of melancholy and hypocondraick Persons, and perhaps the best of Men are apt now and then to fall into these sort of awaking Dreams; our minds are apt to spread wider than our Conditions, and we will now and then, when our understandings are not better employed, be figuring as busily to our selves, what we would do, if invested with such an honour, possessed of such an Estate, &c. as if we were actually Masters of them. Thus our Fancies project shadows, and we take them for substance; we first build Castles in the Air, and then our Thoughts proudly strut through every room of the imaginary Building; we frame an *Idol*, and then fall down and worship it, whilst our *Idol*, in the Apostles definition of it, is *nothing*.

NOW this is not only a vanity and a weakness in our Thoughts, but a Sin too. First because God hath provided better Objects for the entertainment of our Thoughts;

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than such Chimeras. And,

2. BECAUSE that when our minds thus strowl and stray beyond the Circumstances the Divine Providence has placed us in, it argues a sort of dissatisfaction in us, with our present Condition, which is ever criminal.

V. AS 'tis a great vanity of the mind thus to imploy its Thoughts, in imaginary Suppositions, or in drawing Pictures, as it were, of things, and then taking them for Realities, and Originals; so is it, likewise a Weakness and Fondness in the thinking Power, owing likewise to a busie Imagination, to dwell upon, and be ever contemplating a Man's own real Enjoyments, whether of Body, Mind, or Fortune. We are certainly our own greatest Flatterers, and should never be impos'd upon by others in this kind, did we not first delude and impose upon our selves. When God has blest Men with great abilities

bilities of Mind, large Fortunes, or the like, they are always viewing themselves in the flattering Looking-Glass of their own Fancies, (like those who spend half their time in dressing) or many times it proves a magnifying Glass, that represents their Enjoyments or Perfections, in far larger Dimensions than what they have in Reality. Thus the Men of parts will be ever and anon amusing and pleasing themselves with their own Notions and Productions whereby, as they are apt to over rate their own acquisitions and abilities, so are they inclin'd to undervalue and depreciate those of other Men. For whilst our Thoughts thus dwell upon our own Perfections, they are apt at the same time to sit in Judgment too upon the suppos'd imperfections of other Men, and thereupon fall immediately upon making Comparisons, and to be sure bring in the verdict on their own sides. Thus, again, in the case of large Revenues, Men, like

the rich Fool in the Gospel, are ever and anon taking an imaginary Survey of their Estates, an Inventory, as it were, of their Goods, telling them over, as Children do their Counters, or covetous Men their old Gold, when they sing the soft Requiem to their Souls of Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Thus, again, in case of Reputation, for Sanctity of Life, the stiff supercilious Pharisee pleas'd himself mightily, you may conceive, with the thoughts of his own imaginary Piety, and the vogue he had amongst the People upon that account, when his Gravity was pleas'd to thank God that he was not as other Men. Now, I don't think, that 'tis absolutely sinful in it self, to view one's own enjoyments of Fortune, abilities of Mind, and other good Qualifications, and to give one's self the Advantage, if it fairly appear on one's side, upon a just Comparison (tho' great Care in the mean

mean while ought to be had, that the mistaken Charity of self-love delude us not, in covering a multitude of our own Imperfections). for a sober and temperate Person, For instance, when he compares himself with the Drunkard, or the chaste Man with the Adulterer, or the knowing educated Man with the Rustic, cannot but think themselves placed as far above the cheap and sordid Level of the others, as the cleanness and fair Prospect of the top of the Hill is above the Mire and Dirt at the Bottom. It not being indeed in the power of Men's faculties so to stifle the evidence of their Conceptions, as to baulk all sense of Advantage which they find upon the Comparison. But here then lies the Vanity and Sinfulness of this Procedure of our Thoughts, that our hearts are not thereby rais'd to a Thankfulness to Almighty God, as the free Donor of such Gifts, Abilities, and Graces, but we are apt to terminate our Thoughts within our selves, where

F 3 they

they work, and ferment, and leaven all our good Qualifications, by huffing us up with Pride.

VI. A N O T H E R Vanity of our Thoughts, owing to the same cause of an ungoverned Imagination, is seen in their forwardness and impatience of enjoying those Objects we conceive agreeable to us ; like a kind Friend, or eager Lover, that cannot stay at Home till the Person he longs for arrives, but takes horse to meet him, and bid him welcome on the Road ; for how often do our Thoughts anticipate the Revenues, as I may say, of our actual Enjoyments, and, *Chamelton* like, live upon the airy hopes of Fruition : Whence the reason of that common Observation, that Expectation generally has the better of it, and Men meet not with that Satisfaction in the things they expected. For besides the Emptiness and Nullity that there naturally is in the enjoyments of this World (they never being

being design'd to fill up the large Capacities of the heart of Man) our Fancies are always representing to us things more eligible than they are in themselves, and our Thoughts have gone so often out before hand to meet, and converse with their beloved Object, that they have enjoyed, and deflower'd it already, and so have forestal'd the satisfaction of Possession.

SECT. 4.

WE will now, in the next place, instance in those defects which are observable of our Thoughts in relation to holy Things, and the exercises of Devotion.

AND the first weakness of our thinking Power that I would take notice of on this head, is the *enthusiasm* to which it is subject, when we cannot govern and command our Thoughts, cannot keep them orderly and within the bounds of Sobriety,

briety, but they grow wild, and fly out into Imaginations of Visions, Revelations, immediate Conferences with the Deity, extraordinary Gifts, &c. whilst, generally, perhaps always in the latter Ages of the Church, such pretensions derive not from that supernatural and divine Principle, to which they are ascribed, but, to say no worse of them here, from causes purely Natural, as Constitution, Meditation, Discipline, Education, Distemper, &c. For, as for Constitution, who has not heard of the undoubted Effects of natural Melancholy in this kind. What strange imaginary Scenes Men of this dark Complexion have so strongly figured to themselves, as firmly to believe their Reality, tho' as Rediculous and In-existent as any in their Dreams. And as for Contemplation, which improves the former temper, what studious Person has not observ'd, how wild and ungovernable his Thoughts grow upon Profound meditation,

dition, especially if dwelling upon a noble subject, and exalted by a solitary Retirement. And then 'tis obvious to imagine; how a Man, during these confus'd Transports of his Soul, may be apt to ascribe the Responses of his own bewildred Reason, as others do those of their natural Conscience, to some extraordinary Principle without and above them. This doubtless, together with a frightful gloomy Discipline (not to mention the advantage the Devil takes of such Occasions) is the only rational hypothesis whereby to solve those Visions, and supernatural Conferences with the Divinity, pretended to by the enthusiastic Messalians of old, the rapturous and extatick Frensies of the famous Founder of the Jesuits and some of his Disciples; and, in short, all the legendary trash, treasured up for the advancement of the Romish Superstition. For there's no doubt to be made but that abundance of Zeal and Bigotry in Devotion, a contemplative Life,

Hos. 9. 7.

the privacy of a Cloister or a Cell, together with a meloncholly Temper, which it either finds, or makes, has made their *Prophets Fools* (as *Hosea* speaks) and their *Spiritual Men mad* : For too much thinking has made more Mad-men than too little. If from these we descend to preternatural causes of these counterfeited Operations of God's Spirit, Distempers, Experience will inform us what Raptures and Visions are incident to hysterical and hypocondraick Persons. No less an-Enthusiast than *Mohomet* himself is said to have owed all his pretended Divinity to that sacred Disease, as the Ancients call'd it, an Epilepsy. *Casaubon* Of *Enthusiasm*, tells us of those who through a hurt in their Brain have fancied themselves actually in Paradise ; and of others, that amidst the Transports of their Visions and Revelations, have died of that which produced them, a Fever. And as to a certain extraordinary Gift, pretended to still by some People, I believe, I could shew ;

shew, that a Treasure of scripture Phrases, a voluble Tongue, and a warm Temper, gradually heated and inflamed by the impetus of of delivery, together with a good assurance before Men, and an odd sort of familiarity with God, has actually done the feat with the greatest Masters of the Talent.

II. WE may observe a natural *Aversion* in our Thoughts to pious Meditation. When any object presents it self that carries Pleasure, or Profit, or the gratification of any of our sensual Appetites along with it, O how greedily do our thoughts carels, embrace, and bid it ten thousand welcomes! But when God, or Religion, or Death, or Judgment, or any such grave and serious Subject proffers it self to our Thoughts, how apt are they to sink away, hang back, and be shy, and after, it may be, a very short Enterview, and a cold Entertainment, dismiss those Objects, make them stand by and give way

to such as are more entertaining and diverting ? The one's a well-come Guest and old Acquaintance, the other meets with the formal Reception of a Stranger, or as of a Visitant that is not agreeable. When we wind up our minds to the highest Pin of Meditation on these Subjects, our Thoughts, after a very little stay there, presently fall down again, we are impatient and uneasy under the Stretch, and care not perhaps how soon Business, or Company, or the like, step in and set us at Liberty ; so averse naturally are our Thoughts, unless God has sanctified our Hearts, to converse with holy Objects.

III. OUR Thoughts, in regard of holy Duties, are apt to *misstime* and *misplace* themselves, when, tho' they may be materially lawful and good in themselves, yet, they intrude impertinently, at a time not proper for them, when they are not call'd upon, and have no business

business in the mind, like an over officious friend, who, tho' he means well, yet mars a matter through the unseasonableness of his interposal. To every thing, says *Solomon* there is time and season, and 'tis the *right ordering* of things, as to time, as well as place, that renders them proper, and decent, and agreeable: A Souldier may mean very well, and do some acceptable Service by leaving his Rank, or quitting the Post assign'd him, and yet, for all his Success, he becomes a transgressor; and may be call'd to an account for so doing: And just so it is with our Thoughts, I mean particularly in our religious Performances; they may be truly good in themselves, yet if they are forreign to the matter in hand, step in unseasonably, and break their Ranks, they are Criminals. So that when we are at our Devotions, 'tis not enough to bar out all sinful and worldly Conceits from crowding in upon us, but we must stave off all other thoughts that

that relate not to the matter in hand ; for tho' a Thought, for instance, or purpose of doing some good Work be in it self Divine, yet tis a question whether or no the Spirit that suggests it at that time be Divine, because it tends then only to distract us, and mar the performance we are about, as colour misplaced in the face doth the beauty: so then, Gods worship, must be performed, not only externally, but internally too, in decency and order, and we must not offer that great Majesty who made all things, in weight and measure, a tumultuary jumble of Thoughts in our homage to him: But as, in the words of the Apostle ; *He that is engaged in the Ministry must wait on his Ministering, and he that teacheth on Teaching, and he that Exhorteth on Exhortation, &c.* So he that is at his Prayers, must attend to his Prayers, to the particular Petition before him ; he that is giving Thanks to his Thanksgiving ; he that is at Confession to his

his Confessing, &c. directing all his Thoughts streight upwards towards Heaven; and he that is at Sermon, ought, for that time, to apply his whole Thoughts to what is offer'd, and if any other thoughts, howsoever lawful and good, pretend to interpose, must bid them come another time, for that he is now otherwise engag'd, and not at leisure.

IV, 'TIS another sinful Infir-
mity in our thinking Power, that
tho we are willing to entertain
pious Objects in our Hearts, yet
we care not to *dwell* long upon
them, so that they leave not those
prints and impressions behind them
that stick and abide by us, per-
fume not the heart with that due
Fragrancy and Savour they ought
to leave behind them, when they
are past and gone; for tho we
may not be so bad as those, of
whom it may be affirmed, with
the *Psalmist*, that God is not in
all their Thoughts, yet of well
disposed

disposed minds it may be said that he is not much at a time there : 'Tis long ere we can get sight of him through the optick glass of Contemplation, and when we do, our hands shake, or something interposes, so that ever and anon we lose sight of him again, and this Levity of mind, as it is seen in our Contemplations upon any Objects, so more especially in the performance of holy Duties : We set forth in Prayer; it may be very well, with a due Composure of mind and an humble Sense of our obligations to God, and Dependance on Him ; but perhaps ere we are got half way on with our work, our Thoughts, which set out with our Lips, have given them the slip, and left them to go on by themselves, whilst they in the interim have rambl'd perhaps from one corner of the Earth to another, and made the *grand Tour* of the World : When we should earnestly seek God by Prayer, and our Souls and Spirits should ascend
streight

straight upwards in direct Rays of fervent devotion, behold them tossed like a dried leaf before the wind, or as an empty cask upon the waves; for, *instead of good, evil is present with us, and we cannot do the things that we would*; but the World and the Devil knock at the Door of our hearts, step in, and desire to speak with our Thoughts, divert them from their business, and make a Man's heart go after his covetousness, as the Prophet speaks, after his pleasures, his sins or his secular employments: any thing that was forgot before will be sure then to present it self to the mind and sue for Attendance. Nay many times foreign Thoughts come about us, like Bees, as *David* speaks of his enemies, in whole swarms together, and with their humming noise distract our attention; or, like *Abrahams* Fowls, in flocks, to peck at and deform our Sacrifice. And thus, again, it is in that other Branch of Religious duty, hearing of the word, for no

doubt but any Man, upon a just recollection of his Thoughts, will find they were out of Church several times whilst his Person was there; at home, in the Shop, or the Coffer, or indeed any where, but where they should have been; in fine either out of Doors, or at play perhaps within, as much as the Children generally are without. But then take any other sort of objects, pleasurable, or profitable, or honourable, and your Thoughts shall dwell, and hover, and brood over them, all the day, said I, nay, in the Night too, disturb your repose, and awake you; for *the abundance of the rich, to use the wise Man's instance, will not suffer him to sleep.* And so it is of any other worldly project, gratifying Men's Lusts, compassing a revenge, or the like: of the latter of which the same wise Man speaks; *they sleep not except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall.* So intent are Men's Thoughts, so closely do they

they fasten upon these earthly sensual, and many times Devilish concerns, whilst they are presently weary, and frisk off from any thing that is sacred, and sober, and serious.

NOW this wandering in Prayer and other holy duties is resolvable into several causes. As

I. INTO our complex'd constitution of Soul and Body. Whilst our Souls are lodg'd in these pitiful tenements of Clay, they cannot help being affected with the inconveniences of their Habitation. They are confined to the use of Bodily Spirits in their most abstracted operations, and every considerable disorder in the blood and Spirits does therefore of necessity produce a proportionable disorder in the Soul in thinking, and being surrounded with such variety of objects and business, whilst we live in this material World, which through the intervention of our senses, leave
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their Ideas in the Head behind them, the eye of the mind can no more help looking upon them, when they are jogg'd and thrown in its way, than the eyes of our bodies can help seeing when they are open, or our ears hearing the sounds that strike them. All this is natural and necessary, as the unavoidable result of the dependance of the Soul in its most spiritual operations upon the frame and contexture of our Bodies during their conjunction: and we may as well think of ceasing to be what we are, and of casting the Man in a new mould as of a total prevention of this infirmity of our Constitution. And this being so, we must expect to meet with it in our Prayers, as well as in other business of our Lives; tis in Heaven alone, where the faculties of both Soul and Body shall be enlarged and refined, and we shall have but one Object of our Thoughts; God, who shall be all in all, that our Souls shall cleave inseparably to him without the least avocation.

avocation. All which may serve to qualify, by the by, the scruples and vexations incident to some tender minds, who are apt perhaps to entertain too hard thoughts of themselves, because they cannot so manage their Thoughts that they shall regularly attend upon Gods Service, without breaks and chasms in them, without falling off now and then, and straying from their present business : For 'tis impossible, in the very nature of things, our Composition, totally to prevent the first beginnings, or sallies of the Mind towards wandering, for the Spirits, by whose intervention we perform these mental Operations, will not bear so rigid a fixation ; all we can do in the case, and that we must do, is to keep a strict eye upon our Thoughts, to drive away the Fowls that light upon our Sacrifice, to endeavour continually to check and controul and stop them in their career to other objects, and when at any time they have given us the

flip, to call them upon the first discovery home again to their business, and regret our weakness; and if we thus both bewail, and labour to remedy those excursions of our Thoughts which we cannot totally hinder, they are not our sin, but infirmity, which will never affect our main state.

II. DISTRACTING Thoughts in Prayer are very much owing to that natural aversion we observ'd in us to things spiritual and Divine, for such employment of our Thoughts being therefore a sort of *preternatural* force upon them, the *spring* that bends them Heaven-ward will be apt to relax, and give way to the contrary tendency of our minds downwards, so that leaving those unwelcome objects they presently fall back again into the company of the old familiars of their thoughts.

III. OUR distractions proceed, in a great measure, from an over-active and ungovern'd imagination: 'tis the quick-silver part in our mettal

mettal, that runs glibly up and down, and shoots, as it were, in our minds, like Meteors in the Air, traversing our devotions with ten thousand frivolous and foolish conceits, presenting us with those fine Schemes and Images of things, riches, honour, or the like, till the distracted wandering Man, instead of his Maker, worships all the while perhaps the Idol of his own and the Devils making. But we have discours'd the extravagancies of this Faculty before.

IV. DISTRACTIONS in Prayer proceed frequently from an intemperate love of the World and the cares that attend its enjoyments; which so often ingross our hearts, that we no sooner set about holy duties than they juggle the one thing needful out of our minds, and make *Mary's* good part stand by, and give way to *Martha's* concern for the World and the family. 'Tis certainly one of the most ridiculous, and yet most general frailties incident

Luke 10. 41

dent to our corrupt nature, to use this World as if neither we, nor the fashion of it were to pass away ; which is just as if a Traveller, with business of infinite importance on his Hand , should loyter and take up with his Inn on the Road , without ever farther pursuing the end of his journey. And possibly most of the sins that are committed in the World are fairly resolvable into a too passionate fondness for it. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, is a saying that carries a greater force of truth in it, than possibly most Men are aware of. For their principles of action are opposite, their interests are opposite, and they require a quite different frame of mind in their respective Votaries: and we know who has told us no less truly than roundly, *that if any Man love the World the love of God is not in him* ; for it ties down our apprehensions to things mean, and trivial, and base ; and stifles and chokes our desires of such as are spiritual and Divine ; it extinguishes all holy

ly fervour of Spirit, estranges from God, and puts out that sacred flame of love for him, which is the very life and Soul of our devotions to him; it crowds into the Church and Closet with us, and like the Sons of *Zerviah*, is too hard for *David*; so that many times, with *Demas*, we forsake the Lord in our Thoughts, even whilst we pretend to do him homage, having lov'd this present World, whose thorns (i. e. its cares and riches) choak the seeds, in our Saviours estimate, of all the good that is sown amongst them; and therefore it is, that when God required the male Children of the Jews thrice a year to attend upon his service at *Jerusa'em*, he promised that no Man should desire their Land when they should go up to appear before the Lord their God, thrice in the year; for the fears and jealousies that might otherwise have seiz'd them, would have divided their hearts betwixt God and their families at home, and so have blasted the fruits of so laborious and universal a journey: and upon

Luk. 8. 7. 14.

Ex. 34. 24.

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the same account it is, that the Apostle advises single persons, that were able to receive it, to continue rather in that state, in times of difficulty and distress, that they might attend upon the Lord without those distractions of mind, that are almost unavoidably incident to persons deeply intangled in secular concerns.

V. ANY reigning and prevailing Lust will both obstruct and distract our Devotions; for where our treasure is there will our hearts be also, and especially, at the time of our religious Services, will be apt to run out of the Closet and the Church to meet and chat with their best Beloved: We may indeed at such junctures be proof against the Courtship of other inferior temptations, and therefore the Devil takes especial Care then to set the Sin of our bosom on work, to imploy the favourite Lust for our Diversion. And this is so usual a stratagem to decoy our hearts

hearts from our Services, that we may hereby certainly discover our ^{2 Cor. 10. 5.} darling topping Lust, the ~~villain~~ of our depraved Hearts, that which all the others pay obedience to, and do it homage, for that to be sure is it which pretends the greatest interest in us, and thereupon disturbs us most in holy Duties.

VI. OUR distractions in Prayer frequently proceed from those Objects that strike our senses during the Service. For 'tis not in the compass of our powers to give any distinct and tolerable attendance to several and perhaps contrary Objects at the same time, so that the Ideas of those we let in at such junctures, at the doors of our Senses, turn the mind out of its way, and divert it from the prosecution of its proper business. An open and erect ear to every sound will make discord in the brain, and vagrant eyes will cause a wandering heart: if *Diab* like they gad abroad to see the Daughters of the Land,

tis

tis odds but they meet with objects in their jant that will commit a rape upon them. And therefore, we should, either, with *Job*, make a covenant with our senses when we engage in holy duties, let our eyes look right on, as *Solomon* speaks, and our eye lids look straight before us, or, shut up their Doors as much as possible, to exclude the foreign disturbers of our attention, for nothing possibly promotes fixation of Thought more than the closing of our eyes; experience tells us the darkness is an undoubted help to intense meditation, and the Arabian Proverb imports, that when the five Windows those of the sense, are shut up, the House of the mind is then fullest of light: I might assign here several other negative causes, as I may stile them, of this defect, as the want of a true love of God, want of a devout habit of mind, want of preparation of the heart, before we enter upon religious duties, &c. But these will fall better under the last general Head of discourse, the
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regiment or government of our Thoughts upon these and other occasions ; and therefore,

VII. AND lastly , There is no doubt to be made but that the distractions and wandrings of our Thoughts in Prayer, are, in a great measure, owing to the machinations and experiments of the Devil upon us ; for tho' in these ordinary cases we at present speak of, 'tis a difficult, and perhaps unnecessary task to discover, whether the Devil or our own Thoughts are first in the transgression (for they are both ready enough to joyn in the confederacy against us) and doubtless Men are apt many times to charge the Inbred corruptions of their own depraved nature to the account of that infernal Spirit, and so paint him blacker, if possible, than he is ; And it were besides an overnice and fruitless enquiry , to search into those artifices and methods whereby he may rationally be supposed to withdraw our attention from our
Prayers

Prayers ; for we cannot well determine how far he may be concern'd in the use of any of those means of distraction we have hitherto mentioned, as the love of the World, the wandering of the senses, the painted scenes of the imagination, and the importunities of any reigning and prevailing lust. Nor can we with any certainty define what feats he is able to perform upon such occasions, by outward disturbances and inward injections ; for we can guess but darkly at the operations of Spirits, how far or by what way they can insinuate and communicate their motions to our minds ; yet who so considers how instrumental he is in other sins, as in *David's* numbring the people : *Judas's* betraying his Master : *Anania's* lying to the Holy Ghost, &c. more particularly, how much we are many times pester'd with foreign and improper Thoughts during our approaches to the Throne of grace, whilst we find a great ease and freedom in our minds when they are

1 Chron. 21. 1.
Job. 13. 27.
Acts. 5. 3.

are engaged in worldly Business, or in any other philosophical or indifferent Contemplation : And who so reflects farther how much it is his interest to spoil and break off our Commerce with Heaven, and blast the Fruit of all our Prayers, since this visibly advances the interests of his Kingdom, must grant, in the general, that he is doubtless particularly concern'd in the wandering of our Thoughts during divine Service. Accordingly we find that where St. James requires us to *draw nigh to God*, he bids us at *Jam. 4. 7, 8.* the same time, *resist the Devil*, which is a plain evidence, that when we come to *stand before the Lord*, *Satan stands at our right hand*, in the Prophet Zachary's Language, *Zac. 3. 1.* *ready to resist us* ; And our Saviour himself in the parable of the Sower and the Seed, tells us plainly, that *the Devil*, or, in St. *Matthew's* Language, *the wicked One*, *taketh away the Word out of some Mens Hearts lest they should believe and be Saved.* They are the bear-

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ers by the Way side, our Lord there speaks of, such as in *Christom's* exposition advert not, nor attend to what is deliver'd, your careless supine Auditors, who while the Preacher toils, *Christ* speaks by him, and the Holy Ghost is ready to co-operate, are amusing themselves with ten thousand incoherent and foreign imaginations: and what the Devil is so ready to do at Sermons, he will think it much more his interest to do at Prayers, and therefore, methinks, it should be a powerful inducement to engage men to a serious attention on both those occasions, to consider that whilst they are led aside with those vain imaginations, that interrupt their attending to what they themselves say to God, or others speak to them in his Name, the Devil all the while, if we'll believe our Lord himself, is busie with them, lays close siege to their Hearts, and makes them more effectually serve him, than the Lord that bought them. Not that I look upon every such assault and even
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Success of the Tempter upon us, as an argument of an irreligious temper and reprobate Mind : For the Devil, who is all Spirit, can hold out the siege against us, longer than we, who dwell in houses of Clay, can sustain his Incurfions, the very Infirmary of our Composition, where tho the Spirit may be willing yet the flesh is weak, will necessarily make our minds nod, take them off their guard now and then, and consequently give the Tempter an unavoidable advantage over us, yet if these wanderings of our Spirits are grievous to our Minds upon recollection, if we hence learn what unprofitable Servants we are, even in our best Performances, and humble our selves hereupon in the sight of God, begging him to *whip* those *Thieves*, that steal away our Thoughts, *out of the Temples* of our Souls, we shall not stand chargeable with the Robberies they commit upon us, but as the motions of the good Spirit, when rejected, do so much

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the more inhaunce Men's guilt ,
so will the injections of the evil
One, when guarded against, as
far as may be, and resisted, be
sanctified, through the divine Mer-
cy, to our greater advantage. In
fine, this wandring of the mind in
holy Duties, tho in its best Con-
struction 'tis a great Unhappiness,
yet will be only so far imputed for
Sin to us, as it is voluntary in its
Cause, and in our own power to
remedy , and is, in its Progress,
whence soever it derives, indulged
and complied with.

S E C T. 5.

WE proceed now to another
more terrible sort of
Thoughts, wherewith the Minds
of Men are many times unhappily
infested. For it is not unusual, for
some tempers especially, to be
assaulted with abundance of odd ,
extravagant, and horrid Thoughts
breaking in upon them , in spite
of

of all Guard and Opposition. Thus you shall have some, those particularly of musing heads and melancholly Dispositions, press'd upon now and then with Atheistical and Blasphemous Cogitations, tempted either, with *David*, to deny God, *Pf. 73. 2.* from a consideration of the unequal Dispensation of his Providence in the World, or some other such illogical Topick; or else, through the pressure of their Afflictions, or the like, to think hardly of him, to deny him in his Attributes, to charge him foolishly, and to curse him and die. Others you shall have possess'd with dismal Thoughts of their having sinned the Sin against the holy Ghost, of their being Reprobates, cast off of God, without the verge of his Mercy, and seal'd up for destruction. Others, Lastly, there are hurried on in their minds to the commission of some great and crying Sins, even against the bent of their own Propensions; and that, sometimes as far as self Murder it self, &c.

NOW these Thoughts being all of 'em a kin, and of the self same Family, I shall not go about to treat of them severally and apart, but together and in the following Method.

I. I shall endeavour to shew that there is some difficulty in stating their proper Rise and Origine. But that,

II. 'TIS of great use to know it, and therefore

III. IN order thereunto, I shall assign some Marks and Characteristics, whereby it may be known when they are of their Father the Devil.

IV. I shall shew, that howsoever troublesom and afflicting they are, they do not affect nor endanger our main State.

V. and Lastly, I shall endeavour to prescribe the regulation of them.

I. IT

1. IT must be owned there is some difficulty in the enquiry into the rise and origine of these horrid Thoughts, and 'tis hard to know many times whether they are the genuine Issue of our own corrupt Nature, or spurious Brats falsely father'd on us by the Devil. For he can inject as much and more than our Corruptioins can suggest, and yet possibly, on the other hand, they are able of themselves, to carry us on to those excesses that look *diabolical*, and when they joyn hand in hand, 'tis hard to know whether of the two first made the Motions or proves the abler Solicitor of their common cause of Sin : *Out of the Heart*, says our Saviour, *proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, &c.* there they are *conceived*, who-soever *begets* them. And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, resolves some of those black Crimes, for which he brands the heathen World, into *the Lusts of their own Hearts*, and yet at the same time

Rom. 1. 24.

Eph. 2. 2.

1 Cor. 6. 11.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

1 Chron. 21. 1.
v. 8.

Acts. 5. 3, 4.

he has given us to understand, that the *Prince of the power of the Air wrought in all such Children of Disobedience*. And indeed as the Doctrine of divine and humane Concurrence in the progress of true Piety is very plain, and legible, in the Scriptures, so as that we are said, for instance, to *be washed and sanctified by the Spirit of God*, and yet are required to *cleane our selves from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit* : So are the same sins in different places charged upon the Devil, and our own Hearts too. As, *David's* numbring the people is ascribed to Satan, and yet the King takes it to himself : Just as it is said of *Ananias* lying to the *holy Ghost*, that *Satan* put him on it, and yet that he *conceived it in his Heart*.

NOW tho it be somewhat difficult, as we have seen, to know the true Parent of these hideous Thoughts we speak of. yet,

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II. IT is of no small use and concernment to meet with some satisfaction in the Matter ; for the sad Experience, I believe, of many, especially hypocondraick Persons , tells us, (the darkness of whose humor is best fitted to receive such black Impressions,) how apt the grand Enemy of our peace is to throw these *fiery Darts* into our Hearts, and then to accuse us of their burning within us, to commit a rape upon our Spirits and then lay the Child at our Doors, whereby he many times creates such infinite Disquiet of Thought, Horror of Conscience, and Astonishment of all the Powers and Faculties of tender Minds, that they are apt to look upon themselves as rejected of God, deliver'd up to Satan, and in such a desperate and forlorn Condition , that the violent hand perhaps is sometimes thought of to put a Period to the comfortless and wretched Life ; and therefore, I say, it may be of excellent Use, on this Argu-

2 Cor. 12 7.

ment, for the Support and Encouragement of these unhappy Persons, to point out such criterious and characteristics, whereby *the buffetings of Satan*, as we render it, may be in some measure distinguished from the genuine productions of our own Minds, and those generally assign'd by Divines are such as follow.

I. T H E Y are the Devil's Thoughts, not ours, when the *matter* of them surpasses the suggestions of our natural Corruption: for Nature her self, unless turn'd perfectly Diabolical, shrinks, and gives back at those outrageously wicked Motions, that pass now and then in some Men's Minds, and there to be sure they are the assaults of the Devil upon them, to Vex, Disquiet, and Confuse their Spirits, tho he chance to prove unable to prevail with them. An evil Heart, 'tis true, may through its own inherent Wickedness, conjure up those frightful Spectres of Thoughts

Thoughts, that would scare and amaze other Persons, but that it should be able, of it self, to terrifie it self, to fill the mind with Horror, to startle its own Corruptions, and go directly contrary to its own Affections, Inclinations, and Reluctancies, borders too much upon a contradiction to be admitted. No Man, for instance, of himself, can be studious of Life, and yet at the same time entertain Thoughts of turning *felo de se*. The Suggestions of this kind that derive purely from our own Hearts, are always more or less agreeable to Nature, pleasing to our Affections, and fall in with our own Inclinations.

II. THE injections of the Devil are discernable from the productions of our own Hearts, by the *Manner* of their assailing us. Corrupt Nature proceeds orderly and deliberately with us, tampers and argues with our Thoughts, and through the deceitfulness of Sin, gra-

Jam. 14.]

gradually gets ground upon us , till by steps and successive advances it compleats its intended Victory : For our own Lusts do not force, but *draw us away*, wheedle us on, and entice us. But 'tis otherwise with Satanical Injections of this horrid Kind , they are a sort of *motus in instanti*, dart and break in upon our Thoughts, howsoever otherwise imployed and taken up, without any previous intimation of their approaches, the Devil in these cases sends no harbingers before him to prepare his way, but forces his passage on a suddain, shoots like that Lightning, to which our Saviour compares his Fall, into our Minds, and Hell takes our Heaven by Violence.

Luk. 10. 18.

AND as Thoughts of this kind are thus suddain in their first attacks upon us, so are they observed generally to be very pertinacious and obstinate in the continuance of them, which is a

III. IN-

III. INDICATION that they proceed from *ὁ ἀνθρώπος* for tis highly agreeable to the innate malice of his temper, incessantly to alarm the Fort of our Souls with perplexities and anxieties of mind about his injections, even then when he sees he is unable to carry it. The

IV. AND last sign of his being the Author of these Thoughts within us, is from the effects that generally attend them. Our own Thoughts being the natural *issue* of our own hearts do not scare nor affright us, nor are follow'd with any extraordinary perturbation of Mind and Spirit, and therefore when Men meet with such Thoughts, as are accompanied with an horror and dread upon their Spirits, with confusion of mind, astonishment of its powers, and perhaps with equal agonies and convulsions of Body, there to be sure the Devil is the sole operator. Agreeable whereunto is that observation

*Euseb. lib. 5
ch. 16. 17.*

vation of antiquity, that they were false Prophets, and of Diabolical inspiration, who were acted in a confused, perplexed, and distracted manner; the principal Test this whereby the Catholick Christians were wont to distinguish an Enthusiastic Montanist from a Divinely inspired Prophet, as may be seen in *Eusebius*, where we find *Miltiades*, an Ecclesiastic Author writing a whole tract upon this subject, and *Asterius Urbanus* challenging them all to produce him one single instance of a Prophet, under either Old or New Testament, acted after their dark and impetuous manner. For the Devil dealt violently with his Enthusiasts, confused and oppress'd their understandings, distorted and convuls'd their bodily Organs, and in short, put them, like the unhappy Persons we at present speak of, into most terrible agonies of Soul and Body. *Pythia* her self never mounted the Tripods but with horror, where she somed, raved, and tore her hair, like a drunken

drunken or a frantic person, whilst the Prophetick fit lasted on her: and this I was the more willing, by the by, to take notice of, because the darkness of Mind, and violent agitations of Body, observable amongst a company of poor besotteds, if not sometimes possessed Sectaries amongst our selves, agree so exactly with the descriptions antiquity has left us of those Children of disobedience the Devil wrought in them, that one may very well be tempted to conclude he repeats the experiment now and then upon these Men too.

COME we now in the Fourth place to consider how far these horrid and amazing Thoughts affect our main state, and touch our Salvation; an argument so much the more necessary by how much 'tis an undoubted stratagem of the Devil to urge the incursion of such Thoughts upon these unhappy Person, as cause of despair and evident argument of their reprobation

tion; and here is to be observed.

1. **THAT** it is not altogether in our power to govern our Thoughts, they are not absolutely subject to our dominion, for the Heart of Man is as it were an high Road, through which Passengers both good and bad will take their way without asking leave of us; or, if you will take it under the notion of a publick House, which is open to all Comers, not only to the sober, but to lewd and debauch'd company, whose wild roarings, curses, and huzzas will strike our Ears and we cannot help it. For we can no more prevent our *simple apprehensions* of things, than a sound and open eye can prevent its seeing, and the one is no more polluted by a vicious object than the other, and therefore to be sure God will never condemn us for what we cannot help nor hinder, For

2. **IT** can never be Sin to us, because

because unavoidable to be subject to the incursions of these black blasphemous Thoughts upon our minds, no more than 'tis sin in us to be liable to the assaults of any other *Temptation*. What worse is a sober Person for being tempted onely to excess of drinking, or a chaste Virgin to incontinence? Our Lord himself was *tempted* to commit the most gross and abominable Idolatry, and yet notwithstanding that, was as free from sin in his Thoughts, as from guile in his Mouth, because he resisted the *Temptation*, and baffled the Tempter: We sin onely then when we basely give way and comply with him. The Law of *Moses* excused a Virgin that was forced in the Field (far from hearing) *for as when a Man riseth against his Neighbour and slayeth him, even so is this Matter.* So when the Devil commits a Rape upon our Souls by Atheistical, Blasphemous, or any other Horrid Injections, if we cry out for help, abhor the base Suggestions in our
Judge.

Deut. 22. 26

Judgment, our Will, ¹⁰ and Affections, great is our Victory, and greater shall be our Crown and Glory ; guilt is our Portion only then when we embrace the bold Ravisher of our Hearts, and kiss and hug the production of so monstrous a Coaction. He were highly criminal who in a besieged Town should willfully set his own house on fire, but a Man certainly is not responsible for the fire balls and bombs that are thrown in by the Enemy, all he can and consequently, is bound to do, is to use his best Diligence to extinguish the fire enkindled by them ; and thus it is with these Thoughts we speak of, if we make them out of the ammunition of our own hearts we are accountable for them ; but if the Devil, who lays siege to us, throw them in, we are no farther concern'd, then to take the best care we can to put them out, to suppress and hinder their spreading : For, *that which is from within only defiles a Man,* not that which is thrown in from without ; if we are purely passive
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in the matter and joyn not with the Devil's Suggestions, so long they are his Thoughts, let him look to them, they are none of ours, we have nothing to do with them.

III. IT would be considered that these frightful Thoughts derive many times more from an ill habit of Body than of Mind, more from poor Blood and a bad Spleen than from indisposition of Soul and falseness of Heart. *Melancholly*, whether Natural, or acquired by Sicknes, Losses, Afflictions, &c. (and such Persons are most infested with these horrid Thoughts) is of it self apt to fill Mens heads with infinite Crotchets, the blackest Conceits, and saddest Surmises, it creates the Images of Apparitions, Mormoes, and Spectres, and then inclines the poor deluded Man to take them for Realities. Whilst; alas! his malady is generally better cured by good Air, wholsom Diet, and
I Chalybeats

Chalybeats, then by all the ree-
pes of Divinity : And then what
reason has a Man to be troubled
in Mind, or dejected in Spirit ,
more for this than any other
Distemper, why is poor Blood and
a melancholy Disposition a surer
mark of the divine Displeasure ,
than the burnings of a Fever, or
the shiverings of an Ague ?

IV. IT may be added for the
support and encouragement of these
dejected Spirits, that their malady
is rarely incident, but to religious
Dispositions, and pious Minds ,
that live under tender Sense of
their Duty, and an awful dread of
the divine Displeasure. Were they
in those bonds of Iniquity, and
that state of Reprobation they fi-
gure to themselves they would
never be so happy as to experiment
any of these spiritual conflicts in
their bosoms. *Non timeo hos pingues,*
said Cesar of Dolabella, and his roar-
ing Crew, but *Iober Brutus* and *Cassius*
stuck in his Stomach ; the Devil
like

like him, never troubles his head with your supine unwary Sinners; who are amusing their heads with a thousand wicked projects that advance the interests of his Kingdom, for he might chance to jog them out of their sleep of sin, and awaken them to repentance; and so out-wit himself, should he fright them by these terrible injections: and therefore if *Ephraim is joyned to Idols*, if *Hos. 4. 17.*

Men are deeply engaged in notorious sins, he too says, like God, *let him alone*. For why should the Prince of darkness be thought so weak a States-man as to make war upon those who have already submitted to his government, and sworn homage to him? But then he uses all the black art of his infernal Suggestions to stop, and vex, or disquiet the Religious Man in his holy course. 'Twas righteous *Job* that he would fain have prevailed with to *curse God to his face*; and 'twas the Holy *Jesus* that was tempted by him to that horrid blasphemy of renouncing the wor-
Job. i. 11. 2
2. 9
ship

ship of the great God, and substituting him in his stead. So that, upon the whole, Temptations of this nature being rather an argument of a pious than irreligious temper, ought, in just construction to be so far from Ministering sorrow, that they may afford even matter of comfort and rejoycing to those that are exercised therein.

V. A N D Lastly, Tho it must be confest that these black injections, may be sometimes, like other judgments, the Chastisement of our sins, as of our carnal security for instance, of neglect of our Thoughts, grieving the holy Spirit, &c. yet they are even then only the *evil of punishment*, as any other infliction may be, not of sin to us, unless we like, comply with, and approve them; and when they have once gained the design, for which our heavenly Father sent them on his Children, as suppose the awakening them to a more through Repentance than they have yet arriv'd at,

at, taking off their inclinations to the enjoyments of this present Life, teaching them a more perfect Recumbency upon God, abating their Pride, least they should be, with St. Paul, *above measure exalted*, &c. then he takes off his afflicting hand, restrains the Tempter, quiets the mind, and speaks Peace to his People. 2 Cor. 12. 7.

CHAP. III. SECT. I.

THUS much of the second part of our Subject, the Defects, Failures, and Infirmities incident to our Thoughts. We are now arriv'd at the third and last, which is to prescribe some rules for the Government and Manage of them. And thus I will endeavour to do.

I. WITH Relation particularly to these horrid Thoughts we have just now treated of.

I 3 II. WITH

II. WITH Relation to the sinful infirmities of our Thoughts in religious Duties.

III. AND Lastly, I shall lay down such Rules as concern the government of our Thoughts in general.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, how we are to behave our selves with particular relation to these horrid Thoughts we have just now treated of. And,

I. T H E R E is no doubt to be made, but that Prayer, which is so proper a means to the attainment of every good and perfect Gift, and so powerful an Amulet against all the Evils we labour under, will be of special Use in the case before us, *As any among you afflicted, says St. James, let him pray, and what greater affliction, and consequently, more pressing occasion to Prayer than those Perplexities of Mind we speak of, for when can it be more opportune to call in the*

the Aid of Heaven, than when we are thus immediately assaulted by Hell? What fitter to quench these *fiery Darts of the Wicked* than the *Shield of Faith* in God express'd Eph. 6. 16. by our importunate Applications to him for Relief? For then must it be more especially acceptable to God, to testify an entire Dependence on, and Confidence in him, when he seems most of all to hide his Face from us in Displeasure. For if we thus pour out our Supplications before him, hungering and thirsting after the Assistances of his Spirit, and the Testimony of our Consciences, to support us in these spiritual Conflicts, he has promised, and therefore no doubt but in his own good time, he will shine upon us with the Light of his Countenance, and yeild us Refreshment: Will put his hook into the Nose, and his bridle into the Lips of the Tempter, turn him back, by the way by which he came, and give Ease to those who have suffered so much in themselves,

selves, for fear only of having offended him.

II. ANOTHER proper remedy in this case, is to avoid idleness and solitary retirements; it must indeed be own'd, in my opinion, that Solitude is a mighty help to elevation of Mind, application of Thought, recollection of Spirit, and consequently to true private Devotion; which might be the Reason, I presume, why our Lord himself, on this occasion, added sometimes even the darkness of the Night, to the retirement of the Mountains. But yet, in this case, when the mind, left to it self is apt continually to dwell upon one's own supposed desperate Condition, and be perpetually haunted with the Ghosts it has conjur'd up, tis far more adviseable to repair to the City than to the Desert, and to chuse Company before a Retreat: The one will help to lay the evil Spirit, the other as certainly improves its Terrors. If one fall
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in Society, another may lift him up again, but in Privacy, a Man must stand upon his own bottom; and be in some measure self sufficient to encounter with the Tempter, and that in circumstances most advantageous to his Design upon us; for the temptations of Solitude are, I verily believe, more dangerous than those to be met with upon the stage of Action, because it lays us more especially open to the assaults of the Tempter, for which reason 'tis rationally presumed he made choice of the Wilderness, when he encountred with our Lord and Saviour; and both Reason, and the experience of several, of *Ignatius* particularly, that famous Founder of the Jesuit's Order, and eminent Instance of the Truth, assures us, that they who give themselves much up to Solitude, are infinitely obnoxious to Satanical Illusions: If therefore we would divert and break the force of these frightful Thoughts and Suggestions, we would do well to keep our Minds

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employed, either in innocent and agreeable Conversation, or when out of that, in our own and proper Employments; for idleness is a sort of Solitude of the Mind; even in places of the greatest Concourse, and gives the Devil as great an Advantage against us, as the other Solitude of the Desert or the Cloister.

III. 'TIS advised by Divines in these cases, rather to slight than to struggle and contest with the Tempter; not to argue the case or enter into parley with him about one's Condition, (for the conflict will gall and chafe our Minds the more) but, as far as we are able, to let his Hellish Injections go as they come, and be no more concerned for his blaspheming within us, than for the Curses and Imprecations of any other lewd Company that we cannot get rid of. For Opposition do's but perpetuate the Fray, and make the Battle the hotter: A wild Beast, if you violently stop

its Passage, may chance to run over you; let it alone, it will go the gentler by you; The way then in this case is, not to *resist the Devil*, otherwise than by Prayer, but to let him spend his Fury, and bear his Shocks with a severe Contempt of them, with a resolv'd firmness of Mind, and sedateness of Temper, till his force dissipates and wasts away of it self.

IV. AND Lastly, a constant prosecution of one's Duty, howsoever irksome and uncomfortable it may appear, will certainly in time give the Mind Ease, and set it at Liberty from these Hellish Thoughts: The Clouds that darken the Mind now will by perseverance in Duty be succeeded by a perfect Day, a Day of Glory and eternal Brightness. For God will judge no Man for what he cannot help nor hinder, but will certainly reward him who do's him the best Service he is able, and is grieved only he can do him no better. For 'tis true in this case too,

too, that if there be a *willing Mind* it is accepted according to what a Man has, and not according to what he has not.

SECT. 2.

PROCEED we now to such Considerations as may be proper to govern, and fix our Thoughts during our attendance upon religious Duties.

AND here we cannot more profitably commence this important Work, than by the same measure we at first prescribed on the last part of this Subject; that is, by addressing to God for his Aid and Assistance in the Matter, that not onely the Words of our Mouth, but the Meditations of our Heart (especially in our immediate approaches to Him) may be always acceptable in the sight of the Lord our God and our Redeemer. For Prayer it self will facilitate that application of Mind which is

is necessary to a due performance of it, in as much as it purifies the Heart, sublimates the Spirit, and exalts it above its natural Pitch and Level : For by often returning to God, and carefully renewing our commerce with Heaven, we shake off our criminal Dispositions ; and what was at first irksom and wearisomness to the flesh becomes at length an easie and a pleasurable Exercise. He will never be able to arrive to any tolerable degree of Perfection in any Attainment, whose desires do not first carry him on towards it with some Eagerness and Impatience ; and Prayer is nothing but putting our desires into Suit. He is certainly a very temerarious Person, who commences any Undertakeing, without invokeing first the divine Favour and Assistance : The only proper Foundation Stone whereon to build our hopes of Success in any of our Enterprises, and judged as such even by the Heathen World it self, who generally commend their Works with appreciation

tion of good Success from the great Author of it. *Cesar*, being to enter the Senate, sacrificed first, and Prayer among them was a constant Attendance upon that Performance, and *Appian* particularly speaks of that Act, not as of an extraordinary, but as of a customary thing. And if this piece of homage be so highly our Duty in enterprising things that do not, I may say, so nearly regard him, how much more will it be so in our endeavours to attain that grace which flows directly from him, immediately concerns his Honour and is acriminated in him, as its final and onely proper Object.

II. ANOTHER proper remedy for the government of our Thoughts in religious Duties, is to qualifie and prepare our Hearts before hand for the performance: To discharge all Thoughts of the World for that time from their attendance, to require them to stand by, to *tarry here or there, whilst we go and Pray*

Pray yonder. 'Tis true indeed that the *Loins of a Mind*, thoroughly principled with the Love and Fear of the divine Majesty, are always *ready girt about* for the Sacrifice, such Persons living under a constant sense and practice of it, but we address not here to the *whole*, who have no need of a spiritual Physician, but to those who are *sick* of their Duty; who come to it with ten thousand foreign and improper Ideas; with the Images of an Estate, a Purchase, a Family, a Trade, a Ball, a Consort of Musick, or perhaps last nights Debauch about them: To these one would prescribe some preparatory Physick, some sequestering of the Mind from these engaging Objects before they enter upon conversing with God, and corresponding with Heaven, lest the Thoughts that possess'd them this hour or this day, keep their haunt the next, and mar the performance. We are not wont to rush into the presence of a Prince without premeditation, and

Ecclesiasticus.
18. 23.

2 Chron. 19. 3.

and some previous care of our Mien and Deportment, and how comes it then to pass that we dare presume to address the Living God so familiarly, and so rudely. *Before thou Prayest*, says the wise Son of Syrach, *prepare thy self and be not as one that tempteth the Lord.* i. e. I conceive, to be angry with thee, and to curse rather than to bless thee, 'Twas one of the *good things* found in *Jehoshaphat*, that he had prepared his *Heart to seek God* : And no Man pretends to good Musick, before he has put his Instrument in tune ; when *our Hearts are fixed*, O God, when *our Hearts are fixed*, then shall we best *sing and give Praise*. Now by preparation here I do not mean those succinct Applications we are wont to make to God upon our entering on his Service in houses set a part to that purpose, but the revolving in our Minds such previous reflections as these are,

I. THE Weight and Importance

tance of the duty we are about, which is the onely proper Conveyancer of the divine Blessings, and that by divine Appointment, and is of no less consequence to us than the Supply of our wants both Spiritual and Temporal, the promises of this Life, and of that which is to come; tis, in a word, a transaction whereon depends the concern of Life and Death, and what is more, of Eternal Life, and Eternal Death; and will a Man flubber over such a Business as this, will he plead his Cause so supinely as if he were bribed against himself, when so vast an Estate as the everlasting Inheritance, depends upon the Issue of the Tryal? *Moses* exhorts the Jews to hearken unto the Words of the Law, because, *Deut. 32. 40.* says he, *it is your Life.* Prayers and Praises are the *spiritual Life* of a Christian, and therefore when any forreign Thoughts assail it, either by force or fraud, we must take up *Nehemiabs* answer to his Enemies, *I am doing a great Work so that* *Nehem. 6. 3.*

I cannot come down, why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you. A

2. PREPARATORY will be best placed upon the dread Majesty of him we address to, and his more immediate Presence in places set apart for his Service ;

Malac. 1. 14. for God himself alledgeth the greatness of his Majesty to caution Men against offering him any mean and contemptible Sacrifices : *Cursed be the Deceiver*, says he, *which hath in his flock a Male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing : For I am a Great King, says the Lord of Hosts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen ;* and the wise Man urgeth the distance betwixt the great Creator and his Creatures, as an argument of that Sobriety and exactness of Utterance and Affection that becomes his Presence : *Be not rash with thy mouth*, says he, *and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God : for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth.*

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AY, 'tis certainly the want of a due consideration of the terrible name of the great and living God, who is infinitely exalted above our most elevated Conceptions of him, that makes us so often present him with the Sacrifice of Fools, that *Excors Sacrificium*, which the Heathen World look'd upon as so prodigious a thing. It requires indeed a genious, wide, and Philosophical, the portion of but a few, to take in a full draught of Contemplation of the Great and Invisible Being; and tho' it must be own'd, that the most refined Capacity cannot now behold him as he is, shining in his full Orb of Glory (for the Contemplation of his Essence is an Abyss, which immediately devours and swallows up a dark and broken Understanding, it being a sort of endeavour to look God in the Face, which no Man can do and Live) yet he has not left us without witnesses of his Majesty, in the convulsion of the Mountain, and the Agony of Nature at the promulgation of the

K 2 Law,

Law, in the lofty, but yet infinitely inadequate Descriptions that the Prophets give of him : In his works, of *spreading out the Heavens*, and *treading upon the waves of the Sea*, &c. In those frightful and amazing Accounts the Scripture give us, of the transactions of the last Day, &c. And certainly did we but endeavour to possess our Souls with tolerable Conceptions, of this great and dreadful Being, from these imperfect Notices we have of him ; we could not but be induced to take some tolerable care, how and what we say, when we are speaking unto God, for the Angels themselves, the ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before him, do not more truly minister in his Presence, than we do in our addresses to Him. And Oh ! that we had but a glimpse of him that is Invisible, that the God of Heaven would but irradiate our dark capacity, with some beam of his Majesty, with what Reverence, what Fear and Trembling, should we come be-

before him ? And this more especially, in places consecrate and set apart for the payment of our homage to him, where he vouchsafes his more immediate and more special Presence. Not indeed after any gross and local manner, as the Gentiles conceiv'd of their fictitious Deities in their Temples, in which sense it is said of the *most High* that *he dwelleth not in Temples made with hands* ; Acts. 7. but by the retinue of his Angels, which give their more immediate Attendance there, as in their Masters house, by his Word and Sacraments, and by his peculiar readiness to hear, and bless those that devoutly call upon his Name there ; for which reason, as one well observes, the Tabernacle of the Lord was call'd *אהל מועד* the *Tabernacle of meeting* ; not of Mens meeting together, as is commonly suppos'd, when we translate it, *Tabernacle of the Congregation* ; but of God's meeting there with Men, his poor humble Supplicants ? For so he

Exod. 20 24.

Numb. 17 4.

Ezod. 25. 22.

himself gives the reason of the Name :
And thou shalt lay them up says God
 to *Moses*, speaking of the Rods of
 the Tribes, *in the Tabernacle of the*
Congregation, before the Testimony ;
where I will meet with you. And
there I will meet with thee and com-
mune with thee. And what else
 can be the true and unstrained
 meaning of that Passage of our Sa-
 viour's in the Gospel, where he
 promises, that where *two or three*
are gathered together in his Name, he
is there in the midst of them ? For,
 whatever may be particularly affir-
 med of the Temple, a greater than
Solomon is here, even God wonder-
 ful in his holy Places ; sure these
 are no other than the Houses of
 God, these are the Gates of Hea-
 ven.

Mal. 85. 35.

AND therefore we would do
 well to take care how we make
Iniquity, even the solemn Meeting ;
 by affronting God with our lip
 Services, and that so immediately to
his Face ; For can any any Man
 in

in his wits but think, that the great God, to whom the profoundest homage of the Soul is due, is much more affronted than he is honoured, by the dull spiritless muttering a few *Pater nosters*, or any other Prayers, by the bare telling over, as the manner of some is, and stringing up their Petitions? We durst not thus mock our Prince to his Face, we would hardly do it to our Equals, and whence then is it, but through want of preparing our Hearts with due Conceptions of his Awful and Majestick Presence in his own House, that we make thus bold with our Maker?

3. IT might be a proper preparatory reflection to consider the Fruits and Consequences of approaching God in so careless and so incogitant a Manner. I shall not go about to shew at large, how severe God has formerly been upon all disorders and irregularities committed about holy Things and Duties, as in the Case of *Aarons Sons*, of *Uzzah*; of *Lev. 10. 2.*
 the *2 Sam. 6. 6.*

1 Sam. 6. 19. the Bethshemites ; and of the Church
 1 Cor. 11. 30. of *Corinth* ; nor how he threatn'd
 that for this very thing ; because
 his People *drew near to him with*
their Lips, but had removed their
 Isa. 29. 13, 14. *Heart far from him, he would therefore*
proceed to do a marvellous Work a-
mong them, even a marvellous Work
and a Wonder : Which was no less
 than to *confound the wisdom of the*
wise, and the understanding of the
prudent Men amongst them ; I shall
 not, I say, insist on these Consid-
 erations now, because it has seem'd
 good to the infinite Wisdom, to
 alter the nature of his *Inflictions*,
 and for neglects of this kind espe-
 cially to change them from tem-
 poral into spiritual, which, tho they
 do not so immediately affect the
 Body as the others did ; yet en-
 danger the Soul and take away the
 spiritual Life of a Christian. For
 tho, he do's not now smite Men
 with Death, for their unsanctified
 Approaches to him, yet he smites
 them with *Deadness*, with *Coldness*
 and *Indifferency* in the cause of
 Reli-

Religion, suffers them to grow listless, reasty, and awkward at their Devotions, and ten to one to lapse at long run into open Atheism and Prophaneness. For we certainly lose ground by every spiritless Prayer we advance, grow from bad to worse, from worse to stark nought, and *past feeling*. For every such formal performance grieves the Spirit, clogs the Conscience, hardens the Heart, and gives the Devil an occasion to draw us off from our Neutrality, and to make us at last declare for his Party; whence it is not improbable, that, when we have once contracted such a vitious habit and crasis of Soul in Devotion, he himself many times sends us to our Prayers, adding that he may add to our Disease, and turn the best Antidote we have against him into so much stronger Poison to our selves. And therefore we would do well to season and prepare our Hearts beforehand, with these, and the like Considerations, that by a just Reflection upon the Importance

portance of the Duty, the Supream Majesty to whom we pay it, and the fatal Consequences of a perfunctory Performance of it, we may *attend upon the Lord without Distraction.*

III. ANOTHER proper means, to fix our Thoughts in the Service of God, is to *Love* him with all our Hearts, with all the Powers, and Capacities of our Souls; did we *Delight* to have our Conversation with Him, our Hearts would keep our Minds close to their Work, and not suffer them to loiter or to ramble; for our Affections have an immediate Influence upon our Thoughts, and our Hearts generally sets our Mind the Theme of its Contemplations; Love particularly is a commanding and imperial Passion, that bids us go, and we go; come, and we come; do this, and we do it, a passion that ingrosses all our Powers, binds us fast to, and runs our Thoughts so deep into its Object, that we have
neither

neither Leisure, nor Patience, hardly Power, to attend to any others. *O bow I love thy Law!* says holy David, and then it follows, both in him, and in the nature of the things, *it is my Meditation all the Day*; and the first part of his Character of a good Man is, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and the second is the natural Result of the first, that *in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night*. *Pf. 119. 97.*
Pf. 1. 2. For a Man cannot but pore and muse on the thing he delights in; and therefore were our Hearts ravished with the Love of God, from just and retired Reflections upon the benefits of Creation, Preservation, Redemption, and the Glory that hereafter shall be Revealed, did we but kindle this holy Flame in us by frequent Considerations of his patience, forgiveness, forbearance, the Abyss of his Love, and the great depths of his infinite beneficence: things that must needs render the Deity amiable and lovely to us in our Conceptions of him: all
our

our motions would tend Heaven wards, when once invigorated with impressions from that celestial Fire, we should not be at leisure to admit any Rival of God in our Thoughts, and to attend to those little idle Toys and Fancies, that have the impudence to step into our Closets, and distract us.

IV. MEDITATION is another proper Remedy of the wandering of our Thoughts in Prayer. The Hill of Meditation is indeed of difficult, but yet of noble Ascent, that lifts us up so far above our natural Level, that we look down upon the World, and all its Enjoyments, which so frequently interrupt our Devotions, as a very little Thing. 'Tis an heroic and abstracted Operation of the Soul, that lets us into the very secrets of the Objects we Contemplate; that makes every day fresh Discoveries, and gives us both deep and diffused Prospects of things otherwise invisible: the Telescope of the Mind,

Mind, whereby we descry new Worlds, a new Heaven, and a new Earth; the *Terra incognita* of Nature and Grace; and see things at an immense distance from us: It opens to us the Scene of Paradise it self, makes a sort of indistance betwixt God and our own Souls, takes us out, or, at least, makes us forget that we are Flesh, fills our head with those elevated Conceptions, and warms our Heart with those Ravishments of Joy, that we can feel indeed but cannot utter or express them. And he who has never yet been experimentally sensible of this Truth, never yet rightly enjoyed either God, or himself, has the most exquisite Pleasure of this Life yet to come, and wants the preparatory Foretaste of the enjoyments of the other. Meditation in a word, I mean where God is the Object, both quickens and fixes our Devotion, which embraces not its Object but in proportion as Meditation gives it Entrance.

V. A N D Lastly Solitude gives a mighty fixation of Thought, in private, and Religious Assemblies in publick Devotion ; for a Retreat naturally tends to Recollection of the Spirit and Communion with God, it helps to center all the Emanations of our Souls upon him, and gives us more pure and perfect Prospects ; and therefore , *when thou prayest*, says he, who taught us to pray, *enter into thy Closet*, not only to avoid that vain Pomp and Parade, which the Pharisaic Votaries so much affected, but no doubt to better the Performance, by withdrawing, as much as may be, from those Impressions of worldly Objects, that are wont so fatally to persecute and distract us. Any thing that requires application of Mind carries the necessity of Retirement along with it : How much more that Performance, to the full discharge whereof the utmost Stretch of our humane Capacities is inadequate : All which is by no means to be understood in prejudice to the pub-

Publick Prayers of Religious Assemblies ; where the regular Gravity and Decorum of the Worship, the united Zeal and Devotion of the Worshippers, the Sacredness of the Word that is read, the Importance of the Duty, the Dreadfulness of the Place, &c. all conspire to wing the Devout Soul with divine Elevations, to fix it upon God, and give it a Solitude in the great *Congregation*.

AND thus much for those remedies that may be proper to cure the Distraction and Flatness of our Thoughts in Gods Service.

SECT. 3.

WE are now arrived at the last division of our Subject, which is to direct to such means, as may be proper for the government of our Thoughts in general. *i. e.* on whatsoever Subject they are exercised.

AND

AND here not to insist upon that *Catholicon* of Prayer we have already mentioned, that which being a Sovereign and Universal Remedy against all the Evils we labour under, must consequently be of excellent Use against the exorbitancies of our Thoughts; I would advise, in the

I. PLACE, to open the Scene of the Day with good and savory Thoughts in the Morning: To make the strength and first born of our Conceptions every day holy to the Lord; *when I awake*, says holy David, *I am present with thee*; God ever took place in his thoughts, and was the earliest Theme of his Meditations. For, *in the Morning*, says he, in another place, *I will direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up*; we must, like him, if we would with him, learn to hate vain thoughts, consecrate our most sprightly and sparkling Meditations to him, who *giveth his beloved sleep*, and yet himself *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. For there is no doubt to be made, but

that a Mind well seasoned and tintured with good Thoughts in the Morning, will, with ordinary care, retain its Smack and Fragrancy all the day ; but if we let the World or the Devil in first, 'tis great odds but they keep possession all the day, come home too, and go to bed with us in the Evening.

II. SINCE so much of the vanity of our Thoughts is owing to the Imagination, as we have seen before at large, it will be highly proper to restrain that extravagant Power within its due bounds, to confine it home, and not suffer it to run out, ramble, and gad so far abroad amongst variety of Objects, that we cannot at our pleasure call it back again ; to take care however that it make not false Reports of things, and impose upon our Reason with fictitious and Romantic exaggerations of them, to draw out our Thoughts in the dance after it, but that we learn judiciously to distinguish betwixt the intrinsic value of things, and the

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extra-

extravagant Representations of a lying Imagination.

III. SINCE our Minds receive the Ideas and Images of most things originally from our Senses ; since it is by these avenues that outward objects make their way to our Hearts, our Ears being, as it were, the gates by which the objects from without desire to speak with our Thoughts, and our Eyes as windows to our Minds, through which they gaze upon them : It concerns us to set *Waiters* at these *Cinque Ports* of our Senses, to seize upon all contraband Goods, and search all Corners, as the Governour of a Fortrefs will take care to guard its Avenues, and examine Passengers, especially strange Faces, lest it be insensibly betrayed, or surpris'd into the hands of an Enemy, under the appearance and vizard of a Friend : not that the senses are of themselves any way criminal, for they discharge but their respective Offices, according to the Laws of their Creation : Nor that
all

all, or most of the Images of things, they let in, are noxious and sinful; (for what harm had the wedge of Gold or Babylonish Garment in them, when *Achan* look'd upon them, coveted, and took them ; and is not the fair Face drawn, and melodious Voice tun'd by the finger of God, who can do no Evil ?) But they become an occasion of Sin by the doteing of the Heart upon them ; and therefore it is we must guard our Senses, to deprive that of the matter of its Crimes, and let its foolish Fire go out for want of fuel fit to keep it in. And yet how contrary to this is the practice of the World, where our Eyes are every day expos'd to the infection of wanton Pictures, light Dresses, natural and artificial Beauties, to the redness of the Wine when it gives its colour in the glass, and to a thousand criminal Examples, and our Ears stand all the day open to amorous Romantic Stories, obscene Jests, Back-bitings, and Revelings, and most times to flat and insipid Discourses, that neither mi-

nister Morality, nor Grace, nor Reason to the Hearers, so that our Souls return home at night infected with the vain Air of the courses of the day, and full charged with toys and ten thousand Amusements, which leave such sensible Impressions behind them, that we are still hankering after those Objects, that gave us so agreeable a Diversion, our Minds become unwilling Inhabitants of their tenements of Clay, and little better perhaps than Captives taken by Satan at his Will. The *Tree was pleasant to the Eye*, and then the poor Woman inveigled by her Sense, could not forbear to take and eat of the Fruit : So that we had need go and learn what that means, *touch not, taste not, handle not* ; had need not gaze on a Maid, in the advice of the wise Son of Syrach, *least we fall by those things that are precious in her*, and our Eyes be full of Adultery ; had need, in this Sense too, *take heed how we hear*, and turn (in Solomons advice) *from the presence of a foolish Man, when we perceive not in him the*
lips

lips of Knowledge, or wise and profitable Discourse. Had, the Royal *David*, with *Job*, made a covenant with his Eyes, both he and *Bathsheba* had preserv'd their Innocence, and *Uriah* his Life ; but Alas ! the King kept no Life-guard there (as I may properly call it) where it seems it was most needful , and so the *Man after God's Heart* , suffered his own to walk, in *Job's* Expression, *after his Eyes , his steps turn'd out of the Way, and he was deceiv'd by a Woman*. And therefore if we would take one primary Step towards the government and good discipline of our Thoughts, we must, as far as we are able amidst that variety of objects that perpetually surround us, turn away our Eyes from beholding Vanity, and our Ears from hearkening unto Folly, must shut the gates against the Enemies of our Peace, and not enter into parley with them, least they beck and smile upon our Thoughts, give them good Words , call them out , and they , and our affections, that are consequent

upon them, tempt us to yeild and surrender our Innocence.

IV. THEREFORE, in consequence of this, it will be necessary to make a right choice of the company we keep; which has many times, so unreasonable an Awe over the modesty of humane Nature in its propensions towards Good, that like St. Paul's Person, in the 7th. to the Romans, by reason of it, *the good that we would, we do not.* For 'tis a hardy well resolv'd Piety, that ventures to exert in bad Conversation, *but the evil which we would not, that we do* : For the byas of our own propensions naturally inclines us to follow criminal before good Examples. And therefore if we would effectually preserve our Innocence, we must not only let no profane or lewd Conversation proceed out of our own Mouths, but must be deaf to all that's vented by others. For, believe me, there's a strange malignity in bad converse to poyson and infect even the best
Dis-

Dispositions : A sort of *effluvia*, as a learned Person of our own speaks, from the Spirits of Men as well as from their Bodies ; *with the Clean thou shalt be Clean, and with the Froward thou shalt learn Frowardness*, for Lewdness has but a short and easie Passage from the Ear to the Heart. And therefore what King Solomon advises in relation to the angry and furious Man, that we *make no friendship with him, least we* Prov. 22. 23 *learn his ways, and get a snare to our* ²⁴ *Soul*, is equally applicable to any other instance of bad Acquaintance ; for *he that touches pitch shall be defiled therewith*, says the Son of Syrach ; and can a Man, says the wise King, *take fire in his Bosom, and his cloaths not be burnt, can he go upon hot Coals, and his feet not be burnt ?* Will evil Communication let your Manners go as good as it found them ? Or, is it not rather verified by the experience of every ordinary observer of himself, that when we meet with an agreeable, howsoever dangerous or destructive Con-

versation, we carry it home along with us, suck it in, and our Thoughts chew the cud so long upon it, many times in our most private Retirements, that we assimilate the vicious nutriment into a part, as it were, of our very Composition. And therefore the best way to secure our Thoughts from Infection, is, to practise with the Adder, to shut our Ears against the voice of such Charmers, charm they never so agreeably to our own corrupt Inclinations. *To accept no Person against our own Soul, and not let the Reverence of any Man cause us to fall*, but to exchange the Communion of Devils for that of Saints; whose Examples and salutary Discourses may season our Minds, and, as Iron sharpens Iron, rub off the rust we have contracted, and give an edge to our Spirits.

Ecc. 4. 22.

V. AND as Men should be thus choice in their company in order to the preservation of their Thoughts, so likewise the same care would be had of those Books, upon which they
now

now and then imploy their vacant hours. It will not be a vanity to affirm that no Nation in the World exceeds our own for variety of good Books, publish'd in our own Language, and adapted to all Capacities ; and yet, so far of late Years have we suckt in the French Air, that, as some have laboured the Introduction of their Government amongst us, tho the most uneasy and tyrannical in Christendom, so others have as greedily imitated them in their Vices, and made their Vanities classical and authentick : I mean particularly their Plays, Operas, Farces, Romances, and other such like curious Cobweb Work of idle Brains ; in so much that a Man may say on this Occasion, with King Solomon ; *the Heart of him that bath Understanding seeketh Knowledge, but the mouth of Fools feeds on Foolishness.* Such Fools amuse and please themselves with the remembrance of idle and fictitious Stories, with the amours of one Romantic Hero, and the brave imaginary Exploits of another : And
thus

thus the head is fill'd with Froth instead of Brains, and the Thoughts, *Camelion-like*, live on the Air, on ~~that indeed which is not~~, as having no other Being but what a fruitful Invention, and a roving Fancy gives it. I say then, that for the better ordering Men's Thoughts, it will be requisite that they lay out their vacant hours to better purpose, particularly on those infallible Records of eternal Wisdom that are *able to make them wise unto Salvation*, and endeavour to freight their heads with Piety, and Sense, instead of Fumes and Feathers. For what Men read, if it fall in with their own foolish and corrupt Inclinations, leaves lasting Impressions behind it, and, generally, the worst thing that passes in Conversation, either with the Living or the Dead, sticks the longest by us, and affords most food for the Thoughts to feed upon, and 'tis well, after all, if such Persons proceed yet no farther, and turn not the well told *legendarie Tales* that they Read, into true and real

real History by their Practice.

V I. THEN since the Vanity of Thoughts is so much owing to the ill Supplies they meet with, partly from idle Books, partly from as idle Conversation, it will be further requisite to furnish the mind with good materials, for it to exert and delcant on. Since the crudities of the Soul like those of the Stomach proceed so much from those ill Juices which have vitiated its tone and digestion; we must provide it better food and more wholesom diet, to recover its taste, its due crassis, and constitution; for the Soul as well as the Body is apt to participate of the Nature of that which affords it its usual Nourishment. And, here we have as large a Table spread for our mental Repast, as the wonders contain'd in God, in Nature, and in Grace can furnish. View the first of these in his Almighty Power, whereby, as he spake the World out of Nothing, so he can, not only think, but return it into Nothing again :
In

In his Immensity, whereby he fills all Places, and is contained of None : In the Unity and Simplicity of his Nature, a whole without parts : In his Understanding to which the Truth of all things before they had a Being, was as broad noon day to him, or rather he to them, their Essences being all displayed in, and derived from his own : In his Will, the immediate Efflux or first Born of his Understanding, and yet co-evous with its Parent : View him in the Justice of his Judgments, in the Wisdom of his Providence, and in his Goodness towards the Children of Men. *Who so is wise will consider these things, and they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord :* Or look over, in the next place, the Book of Nature, the *Heaven's the work of his Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which he hath ordained :* Those Immense *fire Works*, whose motion is as regular as rapid, and are but as the twilight of the everlasting Day, and of that Light which is inaccessible. Read him further yet in the amazing Instance

Ps. 107. 13.

Ps. 23.

stance of his Grace, when *he reconciled the World to himself in Christ*, let the *Mystery of Godliness* be ever present to thy Mind; *God manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.* But it cannot be imagin'd that I should enter into the detail of those innumerable Objects that afford proper Matter for the Contemplation and Improvement of our Thoughts; and therefore the succinct Advice of the Apostle will appositely take place here: *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, : If there be any Virtue or if there be any Praise think on these Things.* For, the Truth and Reason of all is, the Spirit of a Man is an active restless Principle of internal Motion, that will not be wholly idle, but will be doing, tho it be nothing to the purpose, rather than do just nothing at all. And there.

Ps. 139. 17.

Prov. 6. 22.

Hout. 6. 7.

therefore unless you furnish it with good stuff to work upon, it will take up with that which is next at hand at all adventures ; so that if we would *bring forth good things*, in our Saviours Language, we must, with his *good Man*, have a *good treasure in our Hearts* : (*How precious are thy Thoughts to me, O God, says holy David, how great is the sum of them*) not a small inconsiderable Stock of Piety and Knowledge, but a Treasure, a good Fond, or Bank, for our Thoughts to trade with, and then we shall increase with the increase of God. King Solomon requiring us to bind the divine Law continually upon our Hearts, adds, that when we go it shall lead us : *When we sleep it shall keep us*, and when we awake it shall talk with us. *i. e.* It will entertain our Thoughts, and bear them Company, when we are alone, or, as it's said upon the same Occasion, *when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up* : Times generally of the greatest Retirement. But now without this

this good Society at Home, our Thoughts will certainly seek out for new Acquaintance; gad abroad for fellowship with some other Objects; and ten to one in their jant fall into bad Company: Associate with the *Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*; and get those ill haunts that our Minds perhaps may never after have the power to abandon,

B U T because neither Nature nor Education has furnish'd all Men with equal matter for their Thoughts, and there are different sizes in Understanding as well as in Stature, therefore

VII. ONE would advise, to a more comprehensive Expedient for the government of Thoughts which every one is capable of using, and that is for Men to be diligent and industrious in that Calling or Station wherein Providence has placed them; to do, as the wise King advises, *with all their might what their hands find to do.*

do. For this confines the stream of our Thoughts to their proper Channel, and hinders them from overflowing their Bank; this hedges in the ramblers, and keeps them to their own Inclosure, who, if left unconfin'd, would, like *Jeremy's* wild *Ass* *snuff up the Wind*, and observe no measures. God who is the Father of the Spirits of all Flesh, knew that he had made them active restless things, and therefore to imploy and find them work, to keep them doing as they ought, when they are not immediately ingaged in his Service, he design'd Men their respective Callings and Professions, and fix parts of time in seven for them to take up their Thoughts and imploy them, and if they are not thus ingaged about their own Business, 'tis odds, but that like *St. Paul's* *busie Bodies*, they wander from House to House, mind other Men's, and meddle with many Matters; which may in time cause as great Combustions without, as they do disorder the Head within. Let our Thoughts then

then keep within their own lines, and make no incroachments *hitherto*, within the circle of our own proper business and Station, let their *proud waves go, and no farther*. Let his Thoughts who is appointed to the *Ministry wait on his Ministry*, his, who is to *teach, on teaching, &c.*

VIII. IT were advisable for Men's better ordering their Thoughts, to make choice, as far as they can, of such employments and course of life, as is most suitable to their genius, and abilities of Mind; for that always sits the easiest on them, and their Thoughts more Naturally fall in with their business and abide by it; Whereas if Men's employs lie cross the grain of their inclinations, their Thoughts will be perpetually running after something else, at which they are not so awkward, or if they aspire at things to which their strength bears no proportion; *matters too high for them*, and above the sphere of their activity; the

M weight

weight of the burden will render them painful and uneasy; make them stagger too and fro like a drunken Man, and bring them to their wits end, besides the damage they may occasion to the publick; as Phaeton endeavouring to mount his Fathers Chariot, the management whereof he did not understand, was thereby thrown out of Heaven, and had like to have set the World on fire.

IX. NEXT to this it may be proper to subjoyn the advice of endeavouring to contract rather than enlarge our secular affairs, instead of spreading them wider, to reduce them to as tight and narrow a compass as we can, that we may the better attend to the improvement of our own Minds; an acquisition infinitely beyond the most pompous temporal attainment. For what are honours, riches, pleasures, all the World, to a brave refined and accomplished Mind? Now multiplicity of business is a mighty obstruction

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to

to this mental improvement. He that thinks of many things thinks of nothing, as he that would go several ways stands still; it distracts and divides our Thoughts, like water mixt with wine, debilitates and dilutes them; that River will neither be so deep, nor so serviceable for Trade, that is divided into a great many little channels, as that which flows altogether in its own natural bed. Thus it is with our Thoughts, if we let them out at every little chink, which the concerns of the World, make in them, they'll be but shallow Thoughts, and mar the improvement of our Minds. A Ray collected into a point is far more intense than one variously refracted. As God do's not love idle, so neither over busie people: *Martha's* fault was not that she was imployed in ill but in *many* things, which justled for that time the *good part* out of her Mind. Cares intangle and perplex the Thoughts, and too much Worldly businels limes and clings the wings of our Mind so fast that it cannot take its due and natural flight. Va-

riety of objects ever weakens and distracts the force of our faculties, which are so stinted in their operation, that they cannot with any tollerable vigor direct to more than one mark at once, and therefore if we would bear a due regard to the truest improvement of our Minds, and management of our Thoughts, we must narrow our secular affairs as much as we can ; lest the *multitude of business*, which *Solomon* says, occasions *dreams* in sleep, make our Thoughts to be little better in the day time. And therefore in order to take off our Minds from a too greedy pursuit of secular concerns, that we may be thereby the better inabled to attend upon God and our own Souls without distraction, let us

X. IN the next place, frequently set before us the vanity of the World, and the emptiness of all its enjoyments. Remembring that that was the result of *Solomon's* vast experience in this kind. *Vanity* was the Motto he inscribed on all things *under the Sun*: for even when he gave
his

*his heart to know wisdom and to know
madness and folly, to seek and to search
out by wisdom concerning all things
that are done under Heaven, even
this also, this noble employment
of his vast capacities, he pronoun-
ces no better than vexation of Spirit:
for in much wisdom, says he, is much
grief, and he that increaseth knowledge
(it self) do's but increase his sorrow.
And if this great Master of experience
and skillful observer of things met
with so very little satisfaction, even
in the pursuit of knowledge, and re-
solves the conclusion of the whole matter,
as he speaks, into the fearing of God
and keeping his commandments, we
may safely conclude, that there is
nothing here below adequate to the
large Soul of Man, worthy to en-
gage his affections, and ingross his
powers, and if we can but thus wean
our Thoughts from the World and
its allurements, we shall then be at
liberty to lay them out elsewhere to
better purpose, and to our own
greater and more lasting satisfaction.*

NOT that what I have said on
M 3 these

these two last heads, is to be understood, as if I would have all Men devote themselves to Contemplation, to quit the World and their ordinary Employments, and meddle with no business; for I prescribe it.

2 Sam. 11.

XI. IN the next place, as an excellent remedy against evil Thoughts to avoid Idleness, which in common experience ever gives the Devil an advantage against us; when *David* coming from lolling on his Bed walked idly, it should seem, on the Roof of his House, he immediately presented *Bathsheba* to his Thoughts and soon prevailed with him to accept of the Proffer. For when we are the idlest he is the busiest; when we do the least he does the most with us: If our Minds sleep, he'll sow his Tares the faster, and if we let them lie fallow, Weeds will be the natural Product of the neglected Soil. Standing Minds, like standing Waters, puddle and corrupt, and become the proper Element of Vermin.

XII. AGAIN

XII. A G A I N, it will be our Wisdom, for the better management of our Thoughts, now and then to review them, to call them together to the Muster, and examine the state and plight of our Minds, to encourage good Motions, and discountenance Bad, and to let them know we have set a spie upon them, and that they come not there without our Observation. And because every Man has his blind Side, and the Sin of his Bosom, and consequently our Thoughts run further into some sort of Objects than others, we must take particular care, and after such review shall be better enabled, to guard there most, where our Thoughts ply the most, where their haunts are, and the company they most delight in; as he who commands in chief in a Siege will place the strongest Guard there, where the Walls or other Fortifications of the Town are the weakest. So, if you find that lust, for instance, has stollen in at the Windows of your eyes, and got the greatest ascendant over you, watch your Thoughts

on that side, for there they'l be sure to hanker; So, again, if you observe your self the weakest on the side of provocations, and Anger be your infirmity, take care to have your Reason within call, and take off your Thoughts betimes from resentments, and meditating revenge, for that's the subject they'l be sure most of all to dwell on, &c. And thus by reveiwing our Thoughts we shall both acquire power, and learn how to manage them, and be able to countermine the Devil, who knowing our strong and feeble part, better many times than we do our selves, always layes his train there where 'tis most likely to take fire, and to blow up our Hearts, the strong Fort of our innocence.

XIII. SINCE, as has been before observ'd, our Thoughts are generally too much at the command of our passions, so that look what sort of affections bear the sway in a Man's heart, that way his Thoughts will take their course, therefore is it highly advisable, again, to ride this

this brutal part of us with a strait rein, to raise and spiritualize our *affections by setting them on things above*, and not letting them run so madly as they do on *things that are upon the earth*. For tho' Thoughts give the first being to affections, as no Man can love or hate a thing before he thinks on't, yet when they are once placed upon their objects they make our Thoughts dance after them at their pleasure. As if fear has seiz'd us, it calls in all our Thoughts to view the frightful object, disorders our powers, and makes the mind paint the bugbear with unjust dimensions, perhaps, and unnatural colours; so if desire carry us abroad amongst variety of objects, our Thoughts must keep it company and lie under that infinite perplexity and distraction that naturally attends its extravagance, and therefore if we would command our Thoughts, we must first learn to command our passions.

XIV. HE that would have the company of good Thoughts must
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entertain them kindly, and give them a friendly reception when they come and visit him. If you receive them coldly, and with an Air of indifference, they'll be as shie to you in time, as you can be to them; for the Divine Spirit, the great Author of them, will not always *strive* with Men, but will take wing, fly away, and desert you, for they are nimble movers, and are sent upon an errand that is your own truest interest, and therefore if you have not yet learnt to be wise to yourselves, by closing with their proposals, co-operating with them, and *working out your own Salvation*, they have no Commission to force or drive you on to happiness, like *an horse or mule that have no understanding*, but will leave you not only where, but worse than they found you.

XV. SINCE few Men are of that strong and athletick temper of Soul, as to be able to bear the shocks of adversity, but that it generally ruffles and discomposes their Thoughts, and, like the desperate pushes of
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an enemy, breaks their ranks, and puts them in disorder, it would be therefore of excellent and common use for the management of our Thoughts in those exigences, to be vers'd in the Theory of the Divine dispensations, to bring our selves to a recumbency upon God, and *commit our cares to him who careth for us*, that we may thereby maintain an evenness of temper amidst the roughest emergencies; and enjoy a calm of mind within, amidst the loudest storms without.

XVI. AGAIN, since, notwithstanding the immaterial and spiritual nature of the Soul, it is capable of being wrought upon, and affected by the body during their union; for when once link'd and wedded together, there ariseth a mutual sympathy betwixt the unequal couple, and that thence doubtless proceed many foolish, wandering, and impure cogitations, it would be advisable to tame the one by the macerations of the other, to mortifie the flesh, to *keep our bodies under*, and not cram
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and indulge them, till the Beast rides the Man, till they grow too hard for our reason, throw off its government, and draw even it in too, to second the motions and solicitations of the flesh. For the *flames* of lust *quench the spirit*, as the scorching Sun beams put out the gentler heat of the fire. Foul weather in the lower Region sends up nought but filthy Streams and vapours. *The pure in Heart only shall see God* here, as well as hereafter; and thence be furnished with just and elevated conceptions: for he will not accept *polluted Bread upon his Altar*: Nor will admit an unclean sacrifice. If therefore we would be Masters of our own Thoughts, we must first be Masters of our Appetites, and not pamper and indulge our Carkasses, but wisely avoiding all excesses of this kind, must endeavour by a Substraction of unnecessary fuel from the Body to let the fire thereby kindled in our Thoughts go out.

Mal. i. 7.

XVII. LASTLY, it will highly conduce to the ordering of our Thoughts

Thoughts aright, to live, as much as possibly we can, under this Apprehension, that Almighty God is present with them, see's, knows, reads, and scans their subtlest Motions and darkest Intrigues, better than the Eyes and Ears of Men hear or see them in their fruits of Words and Actions. For lo there is not a Thought in our Heart, but *he knoweth it altogether, and as far off, for I know their Imagination*, says God, concerning his People, *which they go about* Deut. 31. 21. *even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear; For He, even He only, knows all the Hearts of the Children of Men; and, as Job says,* Job. 42. 2. *no Thought can be withholden from him: Hell and Destruction are before him, how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men?* For shall not the Almighty Artificer, who made the Heart, know all the wheels, the springs and movements that are in it? Go then, and ascend up into Heaven, in the Psalmist's Rethorick on this occasion, *make thy bed in Hell, take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, go whither* Prov. 15. 11.

Ps. 139.

whither, do what thou wilt, there's an Ear to over-hear thee, an Eye to over-look thee, and an invisible hand to transcribe and register the closest transactions of thy Mind : We find the Royal *David* had such a continual lively Sense of this matter on him, that he tells us, *when he awaked God was ever present with him*, occur'd immediately to his Mind ; as those objects generally do at our wakening, which most of all engross our Thoughts. And could we but learn to live under the same quick Apprehension, would we walk less by Sense and more by *Faith*, and look through that those things that lie *within the Vail*, it would be a mighty use to us in the management of this hidden and unseen part of us. For since our Sins in embryo at their first conception in the Soul, are as loathsome in Gods Eyes, as they are in their Birth and Production shameful in the eyes of Men : Since the remarks of those who are of like Infirmities with our selves are powerful enough to persuade us, to the regulation of our outward Behaviour, and we should really

really be in confusion, to have any grave sober Friend, whose esteem we value, and whose judgment we revere, privy to all the foolish and unhallowed Thoughts of our Souls; how much rather should the consideration of Gods all-seeing Eye lay a restraint upon our internal Follies? For what absurdity is this to be ashamed of what passes in our Thoughts, could Men pry into those recesses, and yet to let God look on without the least Emotion? What inadvertancy, or Atheism rather is it, to be ashamed or afraid of an overt act of wickedness, least Men should find us out, and yet at the same time riot in our Hearts, and debauch in our Thoughts, when God all the while stands by a Spectator, and if he pleas'd himself, a just Avenger of all such impious Transactions? Since then God certainly knows all that passes in our Hearts, sees and observes who comes in, and who goes out, is intimate to every unclean, or otherwise sinful Thought, to every unlawful Desire, to every malicious and revengeful Wish; to what-

whatsoever, in a word, is transacted in that Cabinet Council ; let us endeavour after such an habituated Thought of God, as may mix him , not in our actions onely, but in all the movements of our Minds : Let the consideration of his Presence ingage us to keep strict Discipline there , to Order, and Govern, and Manage our Thoughts aright ; as what are all open and naked in his Sight, for surely the Lord is with them , tho perhaps we are not aware of it.

I shall shut up the whole with the excellent Collect of our Church relating to this Purpose.

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto whom all Hearts be open , all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid ; cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit ; that we may perfectly love thee , and worthily magnifie thy Holy Name , through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINIS.

